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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention

Second to fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2009

Antigua and Barbuda*

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Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
	Acknowledgements		5
	Abbreviations and acronyms		7
	Introduction	1–10	9
I.	General measures of implementation	11–37	10
	A. Measures taken to implement the Convention's provisions – Article 4	11–30	10
	B. Measures to promote public awareness of the Convention – Article 42	31–33	13
	C. Measures to publicly circulate the report – Articles 44–46	34–35	14
	D. Concluding comments	36–37	14
II.	Definition of the child – Article 1	38–40	14
	A. Definition of the child under the law	38–39	14
	B. Concluding comments	40	15
III.	General principles	41–65	15
	A. Non-discrimination – Article 2	41–45	15
	B. Best interests of the child – Article 3	46–49	16
	C. The right to life, survival and development – Article 6	50–56	16
	D. Respect for the views of the child – Article 12	57–64	17
	E. Concluding comments	65	18
IV.	Civil rights and freedoms	66–90	18
	A. Name and nationality – Articles 7 and 8	66–69	18
	B. Freedom of expression – Article 13	70–72	19
	C. Access to appropriate information – Article 17	73–79	19
	D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion – Article 14	80–82	20
	E. Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly – Article 15	83	21
	F. Protection of privacy – Article 16	84	21
	G. Protection from inhuman treatment, torture or degrading punishment – Article 37	85–89	21
	H. Concluding comments	90	22
V.	Family environment and alternative care	91–137	22
	A. Parental guidance and responsibilities – Articles 5 and 18	91–93	22
	B. Separation from parents – Article 9	94–97	22
	C. Family reunification – Article 10	98–101	23
	D. Recovery of maintenance for the child – Article 27, paragraph 4	102–107	23
	E. Children deprived of family environment – Article 20	108–115	24
	F. Adoption – Article 21	116–122	26

	G.	Illicit transfer and non-return – Article 11	123–124	26
	H.	Abuse and neglect – Article 19	125–134	27
	I.	Periodic review of placement – Article 25	135	28
	J.	Concluding comments	136–137	28
VI.	Basic health and welfare		138–199	29
	A.	Survival and development – Article 6, paragraph 2	138–144	29
	B.	Disabled children – Article 23	145–161	30
	C.	Health and health services – Article 24	162–191	32
	D.	Social security and child-care services and facilities – Articles 18, paragraph 3, and 26	192–196	36
	E.	Concluding comments	197–199	37
VII.	Education, leisure and cultural activities		200–266	37
	A.	Education, including vocational training and guidance – Article 28	200–206	37
	B.	The philosophy and aims of education – Article 29	207–215	38
	C.	Institutional infrastructure	216–236	40
	D.	Technical and vocational education and training	237–248	43
	E.	Guidance and counselling programmes	249–256	45
	F.	Leisure, recreation and cultural activities – Article 31	257–264	46
	G.	Concluding comments	265–266	48
VIII.	Special protection measures		267–283	48
	A.	Children in situations of emergency – Articles 22 and 38	267–268	48
	B.	Children in conflict with the law – Articles 37, 39 and 40	269–275	48
	C.	Children deprived of their liberty, including any form of detention, imprisonment or placement in custodial settings – Article 37 (b), (c) and (d)	276	50
	D.	The sentencing of juveniles – Article 37 (a)	277	50
	E.	Physical and psychological recovery and social integration – Article 39	278–281	50
	F.	Concluding comments	282–283	51
IX.	Children in situations of exploitation		284–306	51
	A.	Economic exploitation – Article 32	284–286	51
	B.	Drug abuse – Article 33	287–295	51
	C.	Sexual exploitation – Article 34	296–298	52
	D.	Sale, trafficking and abduction – Article 35	299–302	53
	E.	Other forms of exploitation – Article 36	303	53
	F.	Concluding comments	304–306	54
X.	Children of minority or indigenous groups		307–312	54
	Concluding comments		311–312	55

XI. Concluding comments and reform priorities 313–322 55

Annexes

I. Tables 57

II. Bibliography 61

III. Laws and acts referred to in the report (short titles) 63

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- Antigua State College
- Barbuda Council
- Board of Education, 1994
- Citizens' Welfare Division
- Clare Hall Secondary School
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Abbreviations and acronyms

ABICE	Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education
ABHTI	Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute
ABIIT	Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology
AGF	Amazing Grace Foundation
ASC	Antigua State College
APPA	Antigua Planned Parenthood Association
DARE	Drug Awareness, Resistance, Education
DDPA	Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
DYA	Department of Youth Affairs
CAC	Computer Access Centre
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CICAD/OAS	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CYEP	Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program
CFGC	Child and Family Guidance Centre
CPA	Childcare Protection Agency
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CCOPE	Collaborative Committee for the Promotion of Emotional Health in Children
CWD	Citizens' Welfare Division of the Ministry of Social Transformation
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
EC	Eastern Caribbean dollar
FBO	Faith-based Organization
GARD	Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center
GATE	Government Assisted Technology Endeavour Project
HFLE	Health and Family Life Education
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICTFEST	International Computer Technology Festival
IMR -	Infant Mortality Rate

IT	Information Technology
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MSJMC	Mount St. John Medical Centre
NCPP	National Childcare Protection Policy
NCPRC	National Child Protection Reform Committee
NDC	National Drug Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institute
NTTC	National Technical Training Centre
NYP	National Youth Policy
NSMP	National School Meals Programme
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
ONDCP	Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy
PBP	The Peoples' Benefit Programme
PDV	Petro Caribe Antigua and Barbuda Ltd.
POWA	Professional Organization of Women in Antigua and Barbuda
SAPD	Substance Abuse Prevention Division
SIRS	Social Inquiry Reports
SLC	Survey of Living Conditions
SUGP	School Uniform Grant Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWI	University of the West Indies
YIU	Youth Intervention Unit of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda

Introduction

1. The nation of Antigua and Barbuda ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993. It also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on the 30th April 2002 and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour on the 16th September 2002.

2. The Committee on the Rights of the Child considered the initial report of Antigua and Barbuda (CRC/C/28/Add.22) at its 993rd and 994th meetings held on 28 September 2004. As directed in article 44.3, this consolidated periodic report (2nd, 3rd and 4th reports) will not cover information that has been provided in the initial report. Rather, it will seek to indicate as far as possible the gains made in implementing the principles and provisions of the CRC since the initial reporting period. It covers the period from 2003 up to the preparation of this report in April 2013.

3. In its discussions, this report will also take into consideration the observations and recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations (hereafter referred to as the UN Committee) in its concluding observations on the Antigua and Barbuda State report (CRC/C/15/Add.247, 2004).

4. Data collection in the nation has shown some improvement in the last decade. As will be apparent in this report, more up-to-date statistical data are now available on many of the areas covered by the CRC. One noteworthy publication is the "Antigua and Barbuda Educational Statistical Digest 2012" published by the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs. This comprehensive compilation of education statistics, outlining trends over the last nine years, is available online to all researchers.

5. The State party has taken on board the recommendation of the UN Committee to establish "effective strategies for using social safety net benefits to further the rights of children" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 56). Within the last decade, the State party has made significant strides in its attempts to alleviate poverty particularly as it affects the lives of the nation's children. Two critical initiatives have been undertaken under the rubric "Social Safety Net Programmes".

6. Firstly, in 2004, the Government started the School Uniform Grant Programme (SUGP). Under this programme, the Government has made it possible for children to obtain free school uniforms every year. Each child is eligible to join the programme from age five up to the end of his or her secondary school career.

7. Secondly, in 2008, under the National School Meals Programme (NSMP), the Government made provision for a hot, nutritionally balanced lunch to be served daily to the nation's children. The project was instituted in 16 of the nation's primary schools in 2007 and in the following year, was expanded to a further two schools. (More will be said later of the impact of these programmes on the lives of the nation's children).

8. The State party also brought into being new policies and measures that have greatly enhanced the general welfare of the children of the nation, the most important of which are:

- **A National Youth Policy**: This critical policy document had been under review for some time and was finally accepted by the State Cabinet in 2007. It has been published and widely disseminated to all the relevant stakeholders.
- **A National Policy on Health and Family Life Education (HFLE)**: The State Cabinet approved this policy in 2010.

- **A National Child Protection Reform Committee (NCPRC)**: In 2009, the State Party sought the help of UNICEF to develop a National Child Protection Policy (NCPP). A National Child Protection Reform Committee was established to oversee the formulation of the NCPP which was drafted by a consultant.
- **The Education Act, 2008**: This Act revised and refined The Education Act, 1973.
- **A Council on Special Education, 2011**: This Council was instituted in November 2011, according to provisions made in the Education Act, 2008.
- **The appointment of a Director of Youth Affairs**: In 2005, the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs appointed a Director of Youth Affairs. This appointment has greatly strengthened the Department of Youth Affairs. The Department now occupies a spacious building with attractive meeting rooms for gatherings of youth.

9. Antigua and Barbuda conducted a census in 2011. However, the data disaggregated by age groups are not yet available. Thus, the figures presented in table 1 (Annex I) are estimated on the base year 1991 — a census year. The estimated total population for the year 2010 was 90,801 with 42,642 males and 48,159 females. For the year 2010, it was estimated that the population of the age group, 00-14 years, constituted 28% of the total population. Young people aged 19 and younger accounted for 36.4% of the total population. It is likely that the trend of a relatively young population will continue.

10. The State party is fully cognizant of this trend. Thus, it is committed to ensuring that the children of the nation have every opportunity to fulfill their full potential — economically, politically, socially, culturally and spiritually.

I. General measures of implementation

A. Measures taken to implement the Convention's provisions –Article 4

11. The State party has not yet established an independent national human rights institution (NHRI) for monitoring the implementation of the CRC. The UN Committee in its observations and recommendations to the State party also urged that a separate institution which is "empowered to receive and address individual complaints on behalf of, or from, children" should be instituted (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 16). Indeed, the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003, sought to establish such an institution through the establishment of a Childcare and Protection Agency. Such an agency would, inter alia, function as a monitoring body for all childcare facilities. It would have the power to intervene in cases where children have suffered harm or injury. It would also have the power to remove children from dangerous or potentially dangerous situations.

12. Similarly, the Act also called for a Childcare and Protection Policy Committee which would formulate the policies and programmes of the Agency. This Committee would also monitor and evaluate the performance of the Agency. However, neither the Committee nor the Agency had been designated. But it is heartening to report that, in recent years, some progress has been made in this regard. In 2009, the government created a new National Child Protection Reform Committee (NCPRC). The membership of the NCPRC is comprised of representatives from all the major organizations and agencies that deal with the welfare of children:

- Chief Welfare Officer
- Director of Legal Aid

- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Transformation
- Director of Gender Affairs
- Director of Social Policy, Planning & Research Department
- Superintendent of Public Health Nurses
- Representative of the Evangelical Association
- Director of Youth Affairs
- Representative of the Collaborative Committee for the Promotion of Emotional Health of Children (CCOPE)
- Education Officer
- Commissioner of Police

13. The main focus of the NCPRC is the preparation and implementation of a National Child Protection Policy (NCPP). This document has been drafted and will be placed before Cabinet for approval shortly. The stated strategic objective of the NCPP is: "to ensure that all children in Antigua and Barbuda are protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation" (Ministry of Social Transformation, 2013:12).

14. It further defines the first of its major goals thus: "to provide a coherent, strong legal framework on child protection, which has as its primary purpose the protection of children at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation" (ibid, 2013:13).

15. The NCPP also strongly recommended that the Childcare and Protection Agency (proposed in the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003) be established in practice as soon as possible.

1. Measures taken to harmonize national laws and policies with the provisions of the Convention

16. Enshrined in the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda is the basic right of the child to be legally protected against any discrimination that could result from the circumstances of his or her birth. The initial report also discussed in some detail three specific legal measures that were undertaken to implement the provisions of the Convention namely:

- The Sexual Offences Act, 1995
- The Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act,1999
- The Magistrates Code of Procedure (Amendment) Act

17. Please refer to paragraphs 8-10 of the initial report.

2. New legislation

18. One of the goals of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is to achieve harmony in its laws and legal provisions across its nine-member states including Antigua and Barbuda. In 2006, under its Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Initiative, a committee of technical experts designed model legislation of family laws for its member states. The drafting process involved national consultations with many stakeholders drawn from a wide-cross section of the various communities. (Please see Sealey-Browne: 2006).

19. The draft bills were designed to introduce reform in family law and domestic violence in keeping with the CRC and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The bills cover childcare and protection,

adoption, juvenile justice, domestic violence and the institution of a family court. The draft bills are intended to act as models to guide the preparation of similar bills in each member state.

20. Even before the OECS draft bills came into being, a significant law — the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003 had already been passed by the State Party. As discussed earlier on, this Act sought to establish a Childcare and Protection Agency. One of the functions of such an agency would be "to make proposals and recommendations for the enactment or improvement of laws relating to the welfare of children" (Part 11, Section 4 (p)).

21. Since the initial report was presented, another important piece of legislation which sought to further harmonize local laws with the provisions of the CRC was enacted. The Maintenance of and Access to Children Act became law in 2008. The provisions of this Act focus squarely on the best interests of the child. Section 8 of the Act states clearly and unequivocally that when the Court is hearing an application made pursuant to the Act, it "shall consider the best interest of the child in all circumstances", including inter alia:

- The educational requirements and expenses of the child;
- Special circumstances such as disability;
- The standard of living of the child;
- And most importantly, must consider "the relationship between the parties to the application and the child for whose benefit the application is being made and the effect of that relationship on the child" (Section 8:1(h)).

22. In addition, the Act creates an opportunity for the views of the child to be heard in private in some cases. It states that, "if the child is 13 years or older and it appears necessary for the court to hear evidence from that child, the evidence of the child will be given in chambers." (Section 8:2).

23. The Act also makes it possible for parents to seek help from the court if they are denied access to their children. This is a particularly relevant provision for fathers who may be denied access by the mothers of their children born out of wedlock. Section 23 of the Act also gives the court power to prohibit a person from leaving Antigua and Barbuda if he or she owes for child support.

24. The Draft Family Court Bill of the OECS Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Initiative, which is yet to be adopted by Antigua and Barbuda, seeks "to vest exclusive jurisdiction for all family matters in a single court to be called a Family Court and to make provision for matters connected therewith" (The Draft Family Court Bill, 2006: 7). A section of the draft bill — Part V — deals exclusively with the welfare of the child. One of its provisions is that in proceedings before the Court involving children, "the best interest of the child shall be of paramount consideration" (ibid: 18).

25. Similarly, the State party has not yet considered the Draft Juvenile Justice Bill. However, it is useful to mention here that a suggested provision in this draft bill is to raise the age of criminal liability from eight years to at least ten years.

3. National or local mechanisms for coordinating policies and for monitoring the Convention

26. Two major mechanisms — one for coordinating policies and the other for monitoring the convention — have been instituted since the initial reporting period. They are the National Youth Policy and the National Child Protection Reform Committee respectively. (The latter was discussed in some detail above).

27. In 2005, the State party established a Department of Youth Affairs (DYA) which amalgamated several agencies (including the former Alliance for Social Well-being) that dealt with matters affecting youth. The DYA, with technical assistance from UNICEF and the Commonwealth Youth Programme instituted a National Task Force in 2006. This Task Force was comprised of 35 stakeholders drawn from a wide cross-section of the community including NGOS and youth organizations. The Task Force worked assiduously to produce a National Youth Policy Document in 2007 which was widely discussed and circulated.

The National Youth Policy

28. It is noteworthy that the Policy is regarded as being, "a conceptual framework for national youth development."(DYA, 2007: 4). It has also made provisions to oversee its implementation — a move from policy to practice as stated in one of its overall goals thus: "The Policy will be supported by a National Youth Development Strategy which will act as the guide to its implementation and monitoring over the next five to ten years" (Ibid: 4).

29. The specific goals of the Policy are to:

"• Define a common vision and framework for youth development;

- Define, promote and protect the rights, the roles and responsibilities of young people in their personal and national development;
- Serve as a tool for advocating development issues that affect youth; and
- Provide the framework for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of youth development programmes and services." (ibid: 13).

30. Youth were well-represented in the Task Force and their views were incorporated in the final product. The general public also participated in discussions on the policy document. Their views were sought via the media and a national consultation. From the many suggestions put forward, the NYP identified eight focus areas, viz.:

- Strengthening Social Environments
- Education and Training
- Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods
- Health
- Participation and Empowerment
- Care and Protection
- Crime, Violence and Rehabilitation
- Gender Equality and Gender Relations (ibid 10)

B. Measures to promote public awareness of the Convention – Article 42

31. It was noted in the initial report that a local Committee on the Rights of the Child was formally inaugurated in 2000 under the auspices of the then Ministry of Health and Social Improvement. The members of the committee were drawn from a wide cross-section of agencies and organizations — both governmental and non-governmental. The membership included health workers, social workers, economic planners and representatives from associations for the disabled, the teaching profession, the legal profession, the police, the FBOs and several other NGOs that are concerned with the status and welfare of children. The committee functioned for approximately two years. All the members of the committee were tasked with implementing the provisions of the

Convention in their various agencies and organizations. (Please refer to paragraphs 18-24 of the initial report).

32. The Ministry of Education continues to hold its annual Child Month every November. The month-long activities focus on the rights of children — their welfare and their progress. Activities include several media presentations by advocates of child rights and cultural programmes in which children take an active part.

33. UNICEF has produced brochures which outline the basic rights of the child. The Directorate of Gender Affairs continues to make these available to all its clients and visitors.

C. Measures to publicly circulate the report – Articles 44–46

34. During the two-year period when the local Committee on the Rights of the Child was active, members of the committee publicized the initial report through several media presentations. Copies of the initial report were sent to the Public Library and to all the agencies that are tasked with the care and welfare of children. As was mentioned in Section 1 above, the new National Child Protection Reform Committee has taken over the duties of the former local Committee on the Rights of the Child and will be responsible for circulating this consolidated report.

35. In preparing this consolidated report, four national consultations on the first draft of the report were held in March 2013. The first was held in Antigua with representation from a wide cross section of agencies and organizations. The second consultation was also held in Antigua, exclusively with school children. The third and fourth consultations were held in Barbuda — the first with schoolchildren and the second with adult stakeholders. The sessions with children focused specifically on the articles of the CRC. They were asked to comment on the various rights and provisions of the Convention as they affect their lives. The concerns raised by these children are reflected in this report.

D. Concluding comments

36. The State party fully intends to adopt the draft legislation designed under the OECS Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Initiative which would harmonize local laws with the provisions of the CRC and CEDAW. It is deeply cognizant of the fact that much more needs to be done to keep the rights of the child in the forefront of public knowledge.

37. It is most pleasing to mention here, two very recent initiatives supported by UNICEF that have brought the issue of child rights under further public scrutiny. UNICEF's initiative of promoting "Child-friendly Schools" and the Ministry of Social Transformation's "Innocence Project" will be discussed later on in this report.

II. Definition of the child – Article 1

A. Definition of the child under the law

38. The problem of multiple definitions of the child under the law was discussed in detail in the initial report. (Please refer to paragraphs 27-40). This issue has not been resolved definitely in law. However, under the Age of Majority Act, 1984, the upper limit of childhood is placed at eighteen years (and older in some special circumstances). Eighteen years is also the age that is used to define a child in the Childcare and Protection

Act, 2003. Part 1 (c) of that Act states, by child is meant, "a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years."

39. Similarly, the relatively new Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008, defines the age limit for compulsory child maintenance as eighteen years (and older in special circumstances). Eighteen years is still recognised in law as the maximum age for the legal adoption of a child; the age when a person has the right to vote; to obtain a driver's licence and to get married without parental consent. Age eighteen is also the age that separates a child from an adult under the Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act, 1999. Thus, it appears that in the state of Antigua and Barbuda, age eighteen years is the generally accepted legal age for denoting the end of childhood.

B. Concluding comments

40. It must be said here that the different legal definitions of the child that exist in various laws and statutes of Antigua and Barbuda still need to be harmonized. Although the working legal age for defining a child seems to be eighteen years, the laws must be brought into line with accepted practice to avoid any possible ambiguities and challenges.

III. General principles

A. Non-discrimination – Article 2

41. The State party wishes to indicate here that the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda gives children full protection against all forms of discrimination. However, it welcomes the UN Committee's recommendation that it include specific information "on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention undertaken by the State party to follow up on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 28).

42. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) recognises that education is a key factor in changing attitudes and behaviour with regard to discrimination of all kinds. It holds that education must deal with: "the promotion, dissemination and protection of the democratic values of justice and equity, which are essential to prevent and combat the spread of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and to promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in societies" (DDPA, 2001: General Issues No. 95).

43. The State party affirms this view to some extent in two of the stated goals of its new Education Act, 2008: "to develop an understanding of the principle of gender equality and equity" and "to promote understanding of the history, language, culture, rights, and values of Antigua and Barbuda and their changing role in contemporary society".

44. The Act also declares that the Minister shall promote its goals and objectives "through appropriate basic education and continuing education strategies" (Please refer to Education Act, 2008, Division1, Sections 3f and 4).

45. The State party is very much aware that such principled declarations need to be translated into specific programmes of action. Some of the measures that have been taken in this regard are discussed in the section on education later on in this report. However, it must be noted here, with some regret, that children of immigrants do not have full access to free primary and secondary education.

B. Best interests of the child – Article 3

46. As was discussed in the initial report, in Section III, paragraphs 46-49, there are three laws which seek to consider the best interests of a child in situations where the child's life, liberty or happiness may be jeopardised. These laws remain on the statute books and come into play in legal matters affecting the lives of children under 18 years. The wishes of the child (having regard for the age and understanding of the child) are taken into consideration under The Adoption of Children Act. Similarly, the Guardianship of Infants Act enjoins that any proceedings with regard to the custody or up-bringing of a child or the administration of any property belonging to the child, must give paramount consideration to the welfare of the child. The Juvenile Act, with due regard to the best interests of the child, states specifically that the Court has the right to remove a child from undesirable surroundings.

47. As discussed above in Section I A (1) on General Measures of Implementation, the new Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008 clearly states that the best interests of the child are of paramount importance in dealing with matters of maintenance of and access to the child.

48. Section 9 (2) of the Act states specifically that: "Before making an order for access to a child, the court shall be satisfied that the person in whose favour the order is to be made is entitled to have access to the child and that access to the child by that person would be in the best interest of the child".

49. Other measures that take into consideration the best interests of the child will be discussed later under the relevant headings.

C. The right to life, survival and development – Article 6

50. It was noted in the initial report that there are specific laws in Antigua and Barbuda that guarantee the rights of a child to life, survival and development. Such rights are enshrined in Chapter II of the Constitution which gives everyone, including children, the right to "life, liberty, security of the person, the enjoyment of property and the protection of the law". Similarly, the Offences against the Person Act offers protection against offences on the life of the child such as infanticide, child concealment and child destruction.

51. In examining the allocation of the State party's resources to various sectors, it is clear that the State party spends a significant proportion of its revenue on education and health. These are two crucial areas that impinge significantly on the lives of children and their chances of survival. However, over the last fifteen years, the State party has been forced to allocate the greatest proportion of its revenue (between 18% and 20%) to serving its national debt. In 2012, debt service payments were at EC $214,506,424, approximately 25% of its total budget. This unfortunate state of affairs has meant that allocations to education and health have not achieved the 40% social allocation ratio that UNICEF deems desirable. In the current year, 2013, the total allocation to these two sectors is 22.73%, a slight decline from the 23% it was the year before. (Please refer to table 2, annex I).

52. It is well known that the world economic recession that started in 2008 has severely affected the GDP of many countries. The economy of Antigua and Barbuda is heavily dependent on tourism — an industry that contracted greatly in the recession. It is to be hoped that some improvement in the economy of Antigua and Barbuda over the next few years will result in greater resources being allocated to education and health.

53. In the period under review, 2003 to the present, the Government has undertaken a number of programmes designed to ease the burden on households and by implication

improve the lives of children. One notable initiative is the School Uniform Grant Programme (SUGP). Most, if not all of the schools in Antigua and Barbuda require that their students wear uniforms. This is a practice of long-standing which appears to meet the approval of all stakeholders — parents, children, teachers and administrators. From time to time, the issue of the desirability of wearing uniforms is raised in the media. But the general consensus seems to be that the wearing of uniforms promotes social equality. It is argued that differences in social status are not readily observable when a child is wearing a uniform.

54. Thus, in order to ease the hardship being experienced by some parents in providing uniforms for their children, the government initiated a non-discriminatory School Uniform Grant programme in 2004. By "non-discriminatory" is meant that once a child is enrolled in a bona fide school up to the secondary level, such a child is entitled to participate in the programme. At its inception in 2004, every child was entitled to two uniforms every year at no cost to the parent/guardian. However, in 2011, the number of uniforms given to each child was reduced to one per year. The government based the reduction on two critical factors:

- Firstly, the recession in the economy that started in 2008 greatly decreased government revenues;
- Secondly, there was some perceived wastage in the provision of two uniforms as most children did not necessarily wear out two uniforms in one year.

55. In the school year 2011-2012, the Government budgeted two million dollars (EC $ 2m) for its School Uniform Grant Programme. In that year, 8,092 parents registered for the programme; 13,137 children participated in the programme and 36,411 vouchers were issued for uniforms.

56. It must be mentioned here as well, the other "Safety Net Programme" — that of the "National School Meals Programme" (NSMP). (This programme is discussed in detail later on in this report under the Section on "Nutrition").

D. Respect for the views of the child – Article 12

57. It was noted in the initial report that there are no local laws that address this issue directly; nor have any new, specific laws been passed on this issue to date. However, since 2004, some important measures and policies have been put in place to further encourage respect for the views of children. The Department of Youth Affairs (DYA) in the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs appointed a Director of Youth in 2005. The creation of this position has greatly enhanced the focus on youth and their concerns. Specifically, since then, the Government published its National Youth Policy in 2007 (which was discussed at some length above). This policy clearly recognises the importance of the right of the child to have his or her views respected at all times.

58. The DYA has also undertaken a number of bold initiatives — programmes and events that place the spotlight squarely on the rights of children and the need for their views to be respected. There have also been significant attempts to organize forums where their views can be heard. Some of these initiatives will be discussed further on in the report as they relate to other rights.

59. To date, the State party has not yet established a database on all youths in the nation as suggested in the UN Committee's concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.247). However, the DYA maintains a database of all youth groups in the nation, including those affiliated with churches or other religious bodies. Youth groups are encouraged to register with the DYA, outlining their aims, mission, place of meeting, etc. The information in the

database is a very useful resource for contacting the youth of the nation when it is necessary to do so.

60. One of the DYA's most ambitious programmes is its Youth Ambassador Programme. The programme appoints youth between the ages of 18 and 26 to represent Antigua and Barbuda at a number of forums where youth related issues are discussed. In addition, the ambassadors are also attached to various organisations, such as CARICOM and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which utilize these youth to carry out developmental programmes within Antigua and Barbuda. It must be noted as well that the Youth Ambassadors also took part in the deliberations that produced the National Youth Policy.

61. The DYA usually conducts a Youth Leadership Workshop from February to March each year. Sessions are twice weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The major aim of the workshop is to expose youth leaders to various development strategies that will enable them to run their organizations more efficiently.

62. Another workshop, the Youth Media Workshop supported by UNICEF, is geared towards teaching young people how to use the media in order to engage in social dialogue. Running from March to April annually, participants are taught about video production, public speaking, and photography.

63. The DYA also holds its annual Open Day usually in May. School children in particular are invited to interact with the staff and learn about what is offered by the DYA. Students are encouraged to take part in various presentations and training sessions.

64. Another exciting initiative is the Antigua Barbuda Youth Media Network — a network where youth can share their views. It airs a weekly radio programme called "Youth Connect", over one of the most popular radio stations in the country. This two and a half-hour programme is managed and moderated by young people for young people, mainly teenagers. They choose the topics to be discussed which, over the years, have ranged from politics to fashion; from corporal punishment to teenage pregnancy. The programme is very popular with the youth in the nation and is closely followed by many adults as well.

E. Concluding comments

65. It can be safely asserted that since the initial reporting period, there has been a marked improvement in how children are regarded in terms of their rights in general. The majority of the population is aware that children do indeed have "rights" although some of these rights have been openly disputed in the media. However, despite the obvious gains made in period 2003 to the present, particularly with regard to the work of the Department of Youth Affairs, there is always room for improvement. The State party is cognizant of the fact that the two pillars of what are considered "the best interests of the child" and "respect for the views of the child" need further social and legal support.

IV. Civil rights and freedoms

A. Name and nationality – Articles 7 and 8

66. It was stated in the initial report that a child's right to a name and nationality is enshrined in the Constitution and other laws of Antigua and Barbuda. The process of the registration of births and deaths is very well established through the Births and Deaths (Registration) Act. Today, as has been the case in the last two decades or more, 100% of all births occur in hospitals or private clinics. These establishments generally take the

responsibility of ensuring that births are registered. In addition, according to the Status of Children Act. 1987, with his or her father's consent upon application of his or her mother, a child born out of wedlock is entitled to have his or her father's name registered on the occasion of his or her birth. As a consequence, if the parties so desire, a child born out of wedlock can carry his or her father's name. This issue was commented on in the UN Committee observations on the State Report thus: "The Committee recommends that, the State party facilitate the establishment of legal paternity for children born out of wedlock by creating accessible and expeditious procedures and by providing mothers with necessary legal and other assistance in this regard" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, 2004).

67. Several cases have come before the court where the legal paternity of children has been questioned by putative fathers. In respect of family matters such as paternity issues, legal aid in the form of pro bono advice is available to persons who qualify through a means test. The Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs has a Legal Aid and Advice Centre which handles such matters.

68. Paternity tests are currently available at the Antigua Planned Parenthood Association (APPA) at a subsidized rate to parents who are in financial need. However, despite the subsidy, these tests are still expensive.

69. The Citizens' Welfare Division periodically encounters children whose fathers' names do not appear on their birth certificates; a dash only has been entered in the relevant column on their birth certificates. In such cases, the CWD, along with legal representation, assist parents in having a name placed on the birth certificate. The assistance is particularly essential for children enrolling in school for the first time.

B. Freedom of expression – Article 13

70. There are no laws which restrict the right of children to speak freely and the right to do so is enshrined in the Constitution. It was noted in the initial report that the government hosts an Annual Youth Symposium which draws representatives of children and youth from all walks of life and interest groups — schools, churches, recreational clubs etc. This is still on-going. However, since the initial reporting period, the government has taken a number of initiatives aimed at further encouraging youth to express themselves more freely. Some of these initiatives have been discussed above under the section on Respect for the Views of the Child — Article 12.

71. One of the most popular radio stations has a daily programme called "Our House" which is designed especially for young children. It is an educational programme which gives students, especially those of primary school age, an excellent opportunity to express themselves as they call-in to the station to answer questions and give their own jokes and riddles. Similarly, a local newspaper with the widest circulation carries a weekly column called "Teen Talk" which is written by a teenager.

72. It may be noted here that the Department of Youth Affairs, during its annual Youth Week also organizes a talent show called "Youth Expressions" which allows young people to display their talents — dancing, musical renditions etc. in a safe and friendly environment.

C. Access to appropriate information – Article 17

73. Please refer to paragraphs 74-78 in the initial report.

74. Of great significance in this regard, are the exemplary initiatives taken by the State party to educate its people in the use of Information Technology (IT). The initiatives are

focused in the first instance on children and their teachers. According to the Prime Minister in a speech made in 2012, these initiatives are designed to transform lives as, "we connect city and village schools and teachers to information and knowledge on the internet. We are narrowing the gap that separates those with and without access to information and knowledge, thereby broadening opportunities for a better life." (The Prime Minister: 2012).

75. The first major IT initiative was started in 2005. The then Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications, Science and Technology inaugurated an International Computer Technology Festival (ICTFEST) which brought together students, businesses and academics to exhibit the latest, available information technologies. The ICTFEST has become an annual show with emphasis on interactive exhibits. Students from all the schools in the nation are encouraged to attend and set up their own exhibits. The 2012 theme of the festival was: "4G LTE 4 ALL."

76. In a bid to make the use of computers available to all, the Ministry created its first Computer Access Centre (CAC) in 2006. This centre, located in a primary school, is open to the general public. It is fully equipped with banks of computers with internet access. Over the next few years, the programme rapidly expanded to the 18 centres that are in use today. These Centres are again located in government-owned primary schools. Young technicians — designated "IT cadets", manage the centres and conduct classes. In 2008, even more access to IT was provided in both rural and urban areas through "Mobile IT classrooms". These are fully equipped buses which travel to primary schools in those areas which do not have CACs. They make their services available after school hours.

77. Another sterling initiative called "The Technology for Communication, Education and Empowerment Programme" was inaugurated in 2011. The Ministry, in collaboration with LIME- a Telecommunications Company, made laptops available to all teachers, at all levels and in all schools, both private and public. By the end of 2012, all teachers in the education system had been supplied with high-speed laptops with broad band internet connectivity. The stated aim of the programme is to give teachers the necessary tools so that they "will be better able to help their students comprehend difficult concepts and engage in learning, provide their students with access to information and resources, and better meet their students' individual needs." (The Minister of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications, Science and Technology: 2012).

78. With a similar aim in mind — that of bringing appropriate information to all of the nation's children — the Ministry introduced in 2012, the Government Assisted Technology Endeavour project (GATE). This project was undertaken in collaboration with telecommunication operators DIGICEL and uses DIGICEL's 4G LTE technology. Its major aim is to give every secondary school child E-Education computer tablets with E-connectivity. The project has already started in the higher forms of a number of secondary schools, including the secondary school in Barbuda.

79. There has also been an increase in number of local programmes in the media that focus on children and youth. One notable instance is the recent introduction in the major daily newspaper — the one with the widest circulation — of a special supplement for children on Saturdays. It contains age-appropriate content such as puzzles, riddles and pictures to colour. It has proved to be very popular with the nation's children.

D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion – Article 14

80. Please refer to paragraphs 179-181 in the initial report.

81. Bearing in mind that a child has a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the new Education Act, 2008 makes mention of this right. Under the caption: "Exercise of Rights" in Division 2, Section 19 (1), the law states that: "A student may

express any religious, political, moral or other belief or opinion so long as the expression does not adversely affect the rights or education of other students, or the rights of other persons in the school."

82. It must be noted here that the practice of starting the school day with some form of religious service is still prevalent in the majority of schools in Antigua and Barbuda — both public and private. To date, there has been no widespread objection to this practice by those involved. However, the Constitution protects children from being forced to participate in any form of religious worship that may be different from their own.

E. Freedom of association and peaceful assembly – Article 15

83. Under the Constitution, this right is guaranteed for all, including children. To date, there have been no instances of children being prevented from assembling or associating freely with each other.

F. Protection of privacy – Article 16

84. The right of the child (and all individuals) to privacy of person and property is generally protected in Chapter II, Section 3 of the Constitution. The right to privacy in respect of personal correspondence is specifically protected in the Post Office Offences Act. In this age of information technology, computers, smart phones and other devices are widely owned and operated by children. However, there are no laws which address the issue of how the privacy of children should be maintained with respect to the use of these devices. School children in both the main island of Antigua and its sister island of Barbuda were of the opinion that parents should have some control over what their children view on the television and the internet.

G. Protection from inhuman treatment, torture or degrading punishment – Article 37

85. The laws pertaining to these rights were discussed at length in paragraphs 87-96 in the initial report.

86. One form of punishment that is considered degrading by the UN Committee is corporal punishment. The UN Committee in its observations and recommendations pertaining to the initial report of the State party addressed this issue specifically. However, to date, corporal punishment has not been expunged from the statute books of Antigua and Barbuda. The law, as it stands in the new Education Act, 2008, still allows principals of schools to administer such punishment. But the new act makes provision for the Minister to abolish corporal punishment in schools. Section 51 (1) of the Act states: "Notwithstanding section 50 the Minister may by order suspend or abolish corporal punishment in public schools, assisted private schools and private schools".

87. Corporal punishment is still practiced in most schools in the nation, especially the publicly owned ones. The debate concerning the use of corporal punishment in schools continues to engage all stakeholders in the education system: administrators, teachers, parents and children. It must be noted here that many school children in Antigua and Barbuda are firmly against the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in schools. The majority of school children who took part in the discussions on the draft of this report are of this opinion. But corporal punishment is still widely used as a disciplinary measure in families. Caribbean parents feel they have the God-given right to discipline their children in this way. Attitudes are changing, however. From anecdotal rather than scientific

evidence, it appears that far fewer parents today than 20 years ago hit their children as a form of punishment.

88. It is useful to discuss here, the efforts undertaken by UNICEF to persuade schools to abandon this negative practice. In the 2008-2009 school year, UNICEF started a pilot scheme called the Child-Friendly School Initiative at the T.N. Kirnon Primary School. One of the major objectives of the Child-Friendly School Initiative is the abolition of corporate punishment in schools. The initiative seeks, among other goals, to demonstrate to teachers and students, other ways of enforcing discipline. The programme has been very well received by the students, their teachers and their parents. Currently, the initiative has been implemented in twenty-nine primary schools and five secondary schools. The Ministry of Education intends to introduce this initiative in all primary schools by the 2014-2015 school year.

89. As was observed by the UN Committee in its concluding observations, there are also no laws which specifically protect children from mental and psychological torture. The State party notes with great concern and regrets that, to date, this issue has not been addressed in law.

H. Concluding comments

90. The issue of the right of the child to have privacy in the ownership and use of modern technological devices such as computers and cellular telephones appears to be a world-wide problem. It is an issue that has engaged the minds of education officials, parents, children and the public in general. Opinions differ widely as to how much control parents and teachers should have over the use of these devices by children. It is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed in law.

V. Family environment and alternative care

A. Parental guidance and responsibilities – Articles 5 and 18

91. The laws pertaining to the issue of parental guidance and responsibilities have been discussed extensively in paragraphs 100-104 of the initial report. Since then, the new Education Act passed in 2008, reiterates the rights and responsibilities of parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly up to age sixteen.

92. In addition, the State party again made reference to the issue of the responsibilities of parents in the new Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008. Section 3 (2) of the Act states thus:

> The parents of a child, or a person who assumes responsibility for a child, shall ensure as far as possible that the child is protected from all forms of neglect, abuse and exploitation and any person who contravenes this subsection is liable to be prosecuted pursuant to section 5 of the Juvenile Act, Cap. 229.

93. This Act also enjoins parents to support their children up to age twenty-five if they are in a recognised institution of higher learning or are disabled.

B. Separation from parents – Article 9

94. The Citizens' Welfare Division (CWD) of the Ministry of Social Transformation handles cases that could cause children to be separated from their parents — cases of

running away from home, abuse, neglect, fostering and adoption. (The specific issue of child abuse, both physical and sexual, will be discussed later on in this report).

95. In the initial report, it was noted that under Section 7 of the Juvenile Act, the Court has the right to remove a child if he or she is considered to be in danger because of physical assault, ill-treatment or neglect. The Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008 also allows welfare officers from the Citizens' Welfare Division or police officers to remove children from situations that are considered dangerous. However, most of the cases that the CWD administers do not warrant the removal of the children from their parents. The policy of the CWD has been to try, in the first instance, to keep the family together without jeopardizing the best interests of the child. Also parents are encouraged to make use of the family and counselling services offered by the CWD, the Directorate of Gender Affairs and the Child and Family Guidance Centre of CCOPE.

96. It is useful to mention here that in the three-year period, 2010-2012, only 11 or 0.8% of all cases handled by the CWD were cases of children running away from home. In the same time period, only two cases of homelessness — children on the street with nowhere to live came to the attention of the agency. (Personal Communication, CWD: 2013).

97. With respect to adoption, under the Adoption of Children's Act, the consent of the biological parents has to be obtained before the adoption order can go through. Local adoptions are facilitated by lawyers.

C. Family reunification – Article 10

98. The State party regrets that there are no laws in Antigua and Barbuda that specifically address the issue of family reunification in cases where family members are separated from each other either within the state or across national borders. However, the State party ratified the Inter-American Convention on the International Return of Children in 2005.

99. Under the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003, one of the stated functions of the Childcare and Protection Agency is, "to promote the permanent placement of children at risk, including placement in foster homes, and to promote re-unification with their families" (Part 11, Section 4: c).

100. Thus, the Citizens' Welfare Division strives to ensure that children who are placed in foster care are reunited with their families of origin once the biological parents can prove to the court that their situations have improved and that they are now capable of providing proper care.

101. Additionally, the Citizens' Welfare Division regularly works with International Social Services (ISS) and regional social service agencies to assist with the reunification of children in care with their families.

D. Recovery of maintenance for the child – Article 27, paragraph 4

102. The statutes and procedures in the laws of Antigua and Barbuda that deal with the very critical issue of the recovery of maintenance for children were discussed at length in paragraphs 109-116 in the initial report.

103. It must be underscored here that the issue of recovery of maintenance for the child is one that, in Antigua and Barbuda, remains in the forefront of advocacy for the rights of the child. The Citizens' Welfare Division, the Directorate of Gender Affairs and other agencies in the nation have kept the spotlight on the need to have parents (in particular fathers) be

responsible for maintaining their children. A new law: the Maintenance of and Access to Children Act was passed in 2008 which improved upon several aspects of the old law.

104. For instance, the court now recognises that every parent (and this includes an unmarried father) is entitled to have access to his or her child once he or she assumes responsibility for maintaining that child. The law now states: "Subsection to section 9(2), each parent of a child and a person who has assumed responsibility for a child pursuant to subsection (4), is entitled to have access to that child".

105. In the past unmarried mothers could deny fathers access to their children if they so wished.

106. Another crucial aspect of maintenance that has been addressed in the new law pertains to the collection of maintenance fees. The court allows for "an attachment order" to be placed on the income or pension of a person who owes for maintenance. It states that,

> The court may make an attachment order in respect of any pension or income that is capable of being attached, directing the person paying the pension or income to periodically deduct a sum for maintenance and to pay that sum into the Magistrates Court (Section 18).

107. However, despite the laws that are in place and progress made for the recovery of maintenance for the child, compliance by many fathers is still a thorny issue. Some unmarried fathers choose rather to go to jail than to pay maintenance fees to the mothers of their children for fear that some of their money may be "used on another man", on children who are not theirs or some other inappropriate use. The CWD and the Directorate of Gender Affairs are working assiduously to negate such views.

E. Children deprived of family environment – Article 20

108. It was pointed out in the initial report that according to Section 12 of the Juvenile Act, children in need of alternative care can be removed from harm and placed in the custody of a "fit person". (Please refer to paragraphs 118-119). It must be mentioned here, however, that the CWD makes sterling efforts to prevent the removal of children from their family environment as much as possible. These efforts include counselling and referrals for social assistance as well as parenting sessions.

1. Children's homes

109. There are two major institutions in Antigua and Barbuda that have been established to provide a secure environment for those girls who are removed from their families for reasons of their personal safety or lack of adequate care. The operations of these two private institutions — the Sunshine Home for Girls of the Salvation Army and the Good Shepherd Home of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Roman Catholic Church, were discussed in some detail in paragraphs 120-125 of the initial report.

110. The Sunshine Home for Girls currently has five girls in its custody, aged 10-16. In 2001, the Home looked after eight girls. The Good Shepherd Home has the capacity to take care of 12 girls. However, presently, there are only five girls, ranging in age from 12-17+ at the home, a reduction from the 13 who were housed there in 2001.

111. A new, church-based initiative, called "Mustard Seed", came on stream early in 2013. This organization has taken over the care of five teenaged girls who came in conflict with the law for frequently running away from home. (They had been placed temporarily with one of the two institutions mentioned above). However, after several other incidences of their running away from home, as a last resort, they were remanded to prison for some weeks. This action generated a great sense of outrage in the community which demanded

better treatment for the teenagers. A faith-based counsellor rose to the challenge and found alternative housing for the girls which she named the "Mustard Seed Home". The teenaged girls are currently receiving intensive counselling which appears to be working.

112. The State party must register its regret that, to date, there are still no safe houses for boys who are removed from their family environment because of neglect, abuse or homelessness. The draft NCPP document of 2013 speaks to this issue and recommends that, as an interim measure, the existing facilities that cater for girls should consider housing boys as well.

2. Foster care

113. To date, no specific laws have been introduced that deal directly with the fostering of children in Antigua and Barbuda. However, as stated above, according to Section 12 of the Juvenile Act, children who are in need of alternative care can be placed in the care and custody of a fit person. The CWD in the Ministry of Social Transformation continues to be responsible for the placement and management of children in foster care. The NCPP document clearly recognises the need to establish a fostering service within the proposed Childcare and Protection Agency — an agency that would "formalise the recruitment, training, preparation and support of foster parents". In addition, in response to the situation where older, disabled children are difficult to place in foster homes, the Child-care and Protection Agency would inter alia:

> offer foster parents specific training and enhanced remuneration to enable them to take older children, particularly boys and children with additional needs due to a physical or learning disability, or a behavioural problem. (Ministry of Social Transformation, 2013:22)

114. Over the years, the number of children in the state who are in foster care has remained relatively small. In 2001, the total number of children in foster care (both formal and informal) was 108. In 2012, a bit more than a decade later, the total number was approximately 133 children of whom 59 were formally receiving a stipend. Of that number, 13 or 53% were male and 28 or 47% were female. The CWD monitors the progress of children who are in informal care. Younger children continue to be more favoured for fostering. In spite of an increase in the population of Antigua and Barbuda, the numbers of children in foster care have not grown significantly over the last decade or so.

115. The reason(s) for this has not been a subject of study. However, one possibility is that parents are taking better care of their children and so there is no need to remove them from a possibly undesirable environment. Officers at the CWD surmise that more women are making use of the new, social safety net programmes such as the National School Uniform Grant Programme and the National School Meals Programme. The Government also instituted another programme aimed at augmenting the incomes of poor families. Under the People's Benefit Programme, started in 2009, persons can qualify for the enrollment in this programme by virtue of disability or economic disadvantage. Approved beneficiaries are able to use the People's Benefit Card to purchase food and personal items at certain prescribed outlets. This is a project funded through the Government of Antigua & Barbuda's participation in the Petrocaribe Initiative, an agreement of Caribbean states with Venezuela. The programme provides a monthly subsidy of EC $215 to applicants who pass a means test which places them below the poverty line. Parents are also strongly advised to take advantage of available resources such as the Family Child and Guidance Centre of CCOPE which counsels them and offers assistance with child rearing.

F. Adoption – Article 21

116. The major law that deals with cases of adoption in the nation of Antigua and Barbuda is the Adoption of Children Act. This act was discussed at length in paragraphs 132-146 in the initial report.

117. The OECS Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Initiative recognises that many of the adoption laws in the OECS member states do not comply with the principles of the CRC. The major shortcoming is that the best interests of the child are not always paramount in the provisions of the various adoption acts. The proposed Draft Adoption Bill seeks to rectify this.

118. One of the concerns of the proposed bill is that in most of the OECS territories (Antigua and Barbuda included), there is no central authority that handles cases of adoption. In Antigua and Barbuda, most cases of adoption are handled by lawyers with no reference to any other agency such as the CWD. The Draft Adoption Bill recommends that an Adoption Board (or agency) be established. Such a Board should be the body that is solely responsible for placing a child for adoption (Draft Adoption Bill, 2006:108).

119. As was noted earlier on, the number of adoptions taking place in the state remains quite small. It is likely, however, that there are many more children who could benefit from adoption, especially older children. The NCPP document points out that it is desirable to encourage and train suitable persons in the community to consider formally adopting children in need of care and protection.

120. Currently, the CWD monitors some cases of adoption of children through home assessments or home studies. In 2010, officers of the CWD did home assessments on 4 adopted children; in 2011, they did 2 and in 2012, they did 5. (Please refer to table 6, annex I). Most of the cases handled by the CWD are of children who were adopted from foreign countries. The laws of those countries demand periodic reports on such children.

121. The initial report noted the traditional practice of informal adoptions whereby a mother may place her child with a relative or even close friend to be raised as that person's child. As noted in the initial report, generally speaking, the parties involved do not regard such an arrangement as an adoption. But in reality, this kind of arrangement is tantamount to a de facto adoption. The UN Committee recommends that, "the State party ensure that in the practice of informal adoption, the rights of the children involved are fully respected" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 46). However, this recommendation may prove to be a very difficult proposition to fulfil in ordinary circumstances. All things being equal, it is hardly likely that de facto adoptions would come to the notice of either legal or child welfare practitioners. It is only when such children are being ill-treated, abused or are living in circumstances that pose an existential threat to them, that the circumstances of their birth may be revealed to relevant authorities.

122. The Draft Adoption Bill of the OECS recognises the problem of de facto adoptions in the Caribbean. It therefore recommends that any new legislation on adoptions that is drafted, should deal with the practice of de facto adoptions. What clearly needs some clarification in law is the right of a de facto adopted child to inherit property from his or her parents.

G. Illicit transfer and non-return – Article 11

123. Please refer to paragraphs 147 and 148 of the initial report.

124. The State party ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Return of Children in 2005. The provisions of this Convention were used in adjudicating a case of kidnapping in 2012.

H. Abuse and neglect – Article 19

125. There are four main laws that address the Convention's concern with the right of the child to be protected against abuse and neglect namely:

- Offences against the Person Act, Cap.58
- Juvenile Act, 1951
- Sexual Offences Act,1995
- Childcare and Protection Act, 2003

126. The first three acts have been discussed at some length in the initial report. (Please refer to paragraphs 149-152). However, the most recent of these laws, the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003, specifically defines "child abuse" as "the physical infliction of injury or harm by a person having authority, care or custody over a child". Most importantly, the Act also states that a child "means a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years". (Part 1, Preliminary Section 2(1).

127. The UN Committee made several cogent recommendations to the State party to take necessary measures to further prevent child abuse and neglect. One of the recommendations is that the State party should introduce "legislation making it mandatory for all professionals working for and with children to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect, and train them in the identification, reporting and management of ill-treatment cases" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 48).

128. It is gratifying to report that two years after the initial report of Antigua and Barbuda was written, this important piece of legislation was introduced in the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003. (Please note that by 2003, the UN Committee's concluding observations on Antigua and Barbuda's initial report on the CRC had not yet been published).

129. Under the Act, the functions of the Childcare and Protection Agency are, inter alia:

> (e) to make timely interventions in cases where the actions or conduct of a person (whether that person has authority, care or custody of a child) have resulted in, or are likely to give rise to any harm or injury to the child;
>
> (f) to provide services for the recovery and rehabilitation of children who have suffered harm or injury;
>
> (g) to investigate allegations, reports or complaints of abuse or neglect of children;
>
> (h) to provide care and protection for children under special vulnerability including orphans, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

130. Another significant advance in measures that deal with children who have been victims of sexual abuse is the establishment in 2008 of a Sexual Offences Unit. This is a specialized unit created within the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda. The Unit deals with all cases of sexual offences throughout the nation including those against children — both male and female. The aim of the Unit is to give assistance in the management of investigations and the collection of forensic and other evidence to assist in the prosecution of the cases. The Unit is managed by seven officers who are specially trained in investigating sexual offences.

131. A number of doctors, nurses and social welfare officers are also trained to assist the police in the management of the cases. Their training emphasises that they must deal with complaints brought by children in a child-sensitive manner. Since its establishment, the Unit has made an extremely valuable contribution in improving the conviction rate of sexual offences cases. Officers at the Unit also work closely with the Directorate of Gender Affairs in providing support and assistance to victims of sexual offences and to ensure that all necessary care and counselling are offered.

132. It can be safely asserted that, in the ensuing years since the publication of the initial report, public awareness of the consequences of child abuse and neglect has greatly increased. The Citizens' Welfare Division organises an annual Social Work Week. During that week, officers from that department make frequent appearances on radio and television. One of their major aims is to highlight and prevent incidences of child abuse and neglect.

133. Recently, in January 2013, the Ministry of Social Transformation has started publishing a series of anonymous testimonies in the most widely circulated newspaper in the nation. These are written by persons who, as children, were subjected to all forms of abuse, both mental and physical. The articles focus on exposing the scourge of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse. They have generated widespread commentary in the media. Many citizens have expressed outrage at the abuse and have begun to agitate for greater societal vigilance in protecting the nation's children from such harmful practices.

134. The State party has fully endorsed the UNICEF's Break the Silence Project by initiating a project of its own called the Innocence Project which is also aimed at increasing public awareness of child sexual abuse. The Ministry of Social Transformation which spearheaded the project in Antigua and Barbuda, is working closely with the media and all the agencies and bodies tasked with child welfare. The year-long campaign of "breaking the silence" surrounding child sexual abuse was launched with a church service in Antigua on March 22nd, 2013, under the theme, "Year of Truth …There's More Than Meets the Eye." This was followed on April 19th by a march through the streets of St. John's City which ended with an open-air concert. The activities of the Innocence Project have attracted a great deal of attention and participation from the public. There is no doubt that public awareness of the scourge of child abuse has increased significantly. Hopefully, this focus on the basic right of children to retain their innocence will increase throughout the year of the campaign and beyond.

I. Periodic review of placement – Article 25

135. The State party regrets that there is no local law that makes provision specifically for a periodic review of the treatment provided for a child who "has been placed by competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection, or treatment of his or her physical or mental health."

J. Concluding comments

136. It can safely be asserted that considerable strides have been made with respect to the care and protection of children within their family environments and within alternative care facilities. However, as mentioned above, mechanisms for periodic reviews of placement still need to be formally instituted.

137. New laws such as the Maintenance of and Access to Children, 2008 have improved the status and welfare of children under the law. The drafting of a National Child Protection Policy for Antigua and Barbuda, with technical assistance from UNICEF, can also be seen

as another important development in establishing provisions for the care and protection for the nation's children. The State party wishes to affirm its commitment to ensuring that the draft document is approved by Cabinet before the ending of the second half of 2013. More importantly, the State party pledges to ensure that the measures therein will be translated into practice.

VI. Basic health and welfare

A. Survival and development – Article 6, paragraph 2

138. It is pertinent to note here that in focus group discussions on the CRC with children in Barbuda (March 2013), the very first comment made by a teenaged girl was: "How can we have a right to survive and develop our full potential when our island is largely below sea level?" (This student was obviously aware of the current debate on the potential risk of the flooding of low-lying lands due to rising sea levels). This concern is one that has no immediate solution. But the State party acknowledges it has to address the issue seriously before it is too late.

139. The life expectancy at birth in Antigua and Barbuda in 2001 was estimated to be 68.45 years for males and 73.14 for females. Today, it has increased to 73 years for males and 76 years for females. The health of the nation's children continues to be relatively sound. Statistics that have some relevance to the overall health of the nation's children are presented in table 3, annex I.

140. In the year 2000, the crude birth rate was 14.04 (per 1000 of the population). In 2011, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the rate had increased to 16.19.

141. However, IMR — Infant Mortality Rates — have remained favourably low over the last thirteen years or so as the following statistics attest. For instance, in 1999, an IMR of 17.0 (per 1000 live births) was recorded. Ten years later in 2009, the rate was considerably lower, 15.67. Despite the fact that a high of 21.72 was recorded in 2007, the rate fell further to a record low of 15.0 in 2010. But it rose again to 17.0 in 2011, the most recent year for which statistics are available.

142. Similarly, Maternal Mortality Rates — MMR continue to be very good. An excellent MMR of 0 per 10,000 births was recorded in the decade 1990 and 2000. In more recent years, the rate has increased somewhat but not to any great degree that should cause concern. For the five-year period, 2007-2011, as indicated in table 3, annex I, the rates were as follows:

- In 2007, the rate was 0.81;
- In 2008, the rate was 0;
- In 2009 the rate was 1.42;
- In 2010, the rate was 0.81;
- In 2011, the rate was once again 0.

143. The main reason for the very favourable MMR can be attributed to the fact that over the last two decades or so, 100% of all births take place in either the government hospital or in private medical centres.

144. In 2009, the government opened a modern 185-bed general hospital called, "Mount St. John Medical Centre" (MSJMC). This major medical facility is a great improvement on the former Holberton Hospital. MSJMC has a well-equipped Children's ward and a modern

Neonatal Intensive-care Unit. The MSJMC, in collaboration with the Medical Benefits scheme (MBS) offers free medical attention to children of nationals under the age of sixteen years. Because of the high social and financial costs, the children of immigrants have to pay to receive medical attention.

B. Disabled children – Article 23

145. The State party has signed but has not yet ratified the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

146. The initial report examined at length the relevant findings of a survey done by UNICEF in 2000 on "Children with Disabilities in the Caribbean". (Please refer to paragraphs 168-172).

147. No studies on disabilities have been done since the 2000 UNICEF survey. However, in 2008, an officer was appointed in the Community Development Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Transformation with responsibilities for looking after the welfare of disabled persons. The functions of this position also include advocacy. The officer is currently holding consultations with officials in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Legal Affairs to ratify the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

148. It must be noted here with some regret that there is no mandatory reporting of disabilities. The recent census taken in 2011 asked very detailed questions about disabilities which should yield excellent baseline data. However, the census data are not yet available.

Services for children with disabilities

149. Please refer to paragraphs 174-182 in the initial report.

150. The State party firmly believes that children with disabilities must not be discriminated against in respect of education. The new Education Act, 2008 speaks specifically of the need to cater for persons with disabilities. Division 4, section 84 (1) of the Act states thus: "The Director of Education shall provide special education programmes for students of compulsory school age who by virtue of intellectual, communicative, behavioural, physical or multiple exceptionalities are in need of special education."

151. Thus, according to provisions made in the Education Act, 2008, a Special Education Council was instituted in November 2011. The Council is tasked with analysing the status and availability of educational resources as they relate to children with special needs. A critical proposal has been put forward by the Council to establish a Diagnostic Centre which would screen children for learning and physical disabilities. Plans are currently in place to have such a Centre fully operational in the near future. The Council has also formulated á code of practice governing the operation of institutions that cater for children with special needs.

152. In addition, the Department of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education now has a unit devoted to safeguarding the welfare of marginal youths and youths at risk. There is a trained youth officer who is charged with the responsibility of monitoring facilities that cater for such children, especially the disabled.

153. Table 5, annex I presents a summary of the facilities that are available for children with special needs. However, it must be acknowledged with some regret that few opportunities for education are available to children in Barbuda who are disabled.

154. Over the years there has been considerable improvement in the education and care of children enrolled at the Adele school. This premier institution for children with special needs receives some funding from the government. In 2001, there were 67 pupils enrolled

in this school. In 2012, the number had increased slightly to 74: 46 males and 28 females. Currently, there are 79 children ranging in age from 5 to 18+. (Please refer to table 5, annex I). The Adele School has a staff/student ratio of approximately 1: 6. Most of the teachers and caregivers, 11 out of 14, are trained in the care and education of persons with various kinds of disabilities including Asperger's syndrome and dyslexia.

155. The Ministry of Education continues to maintain two specialized units at the T.N. Kirnon primary school — one for blind children and the other for deaf children. As much as possible, an attempt is made to integrate these children in the daily life of the school. However, they are still housed in separate facilities for the convenience of using specialized equipment.

156. In 2001-2002, the Unit for the Visually Impaired had 9 students and ten years later, in 2011-2012, there was one less student. Of the 8 students enrolled in 2011-2012, four were boys and four were girls. Currently in 2013, the numbers and gender distribution remain the same. Today, there are three specially trained teachers to teach the 8 students whereas in 2001, there was only one teacher for the 9 students.

157. In 2001-2002, the Unit for the Deaf had 9 students on roll. In 2011-2012, ten years later, the number had increased to 14 students, 6 boys and 8 girls. Currently, in 2013, there are 15 students — 10 boys and 5 girls with 3 specially trained teachers, one more than in 2001.

158. Since the period of initial reporting, the Amazing Grace Foundation (AGF) an NGO-managed residential care facility for disabled children, has had a number of challenges the most critical of which are financial. In these years of economic recession, corporate donations have fallen drastically short of what is needed to run the institution efficiently. At one stage, the facility had virtually closed down and is now attempting to build up its resources once more. Enrolment at the AGF fell from the 136 it was in 2000, to just six children, five of whom are currently in residential care and one of whom is in day-care. (Please note that in 2000, many of the 136 disabled children used the Foundation's day-care facilities rather than being housed permanently at its premises).

159. A new, private educational facility for children with special needs — called the Victory Centre — was established in 2012. The Centre currently has 19 children on roll. The staff/student ratio is 1:3 and all the staff members are trained, including a music teacher. As is the case of the Adele school and the other facilities discussed above, there are more boys than girls on roll: 11 boys and 9 girls.

160. There is still no separate institution catering for children who are mentally ill. Children who appear to have mental problems continue to be housed at the Children's Ward of the general hospital — the Mount St. John Medical Centre. The general mental hospital now known as "Clarevue Psychiatric Hospital" does not admit persons under 18 years of age. The Collaborative Committee for the Promotion of Emotional Health in Children (CCOPE) continues to operate its Child and Family Guidance Centre where children who are deemed to have behavioural problems receive counselling. They are usually referred to the Centre by a magistrate or by the Citizens' Welfare Division.

161. The Ministry of Telecommunications, Science and Technology (as the Ministry is now known since January 2013) had signalled its intention to have the telecom firm, DIGICEL, build a multi-purpose ICT Training Facility and Special Needs Resource Centre on state owned lands. The Special Needs Resource Centre is specifically designed to enhance the ICT training of adults and children with special needs. This facility was slated to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2012, but this objective has not been realized as yet.

C. Health and health services – Article 24

1. Legislative provisions for health and health services

162. Please refer to paragraph 183 in the initial report.

2. Primary health care – Maternal and child health

163. Maternal and child health continues to be good. Health care remains free at the 26 government primary health care, community clinics. These primary health care facilities are still heavily patronized. Immunization rates are among the best in the world, still close to 100%. The Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) continues to offers free medical care to children up to age 16 years. It must be noted, however, the laws have not changed to officially raise the age of majority to 18, thus compelling the state to look after the welfare of children up to this age. The presumption in law is that a child can begin to earn wages legitimately at age 16 and in so doing, would be liable to make his or her compulsory contributions to the MBS.

3. Nutrition

164. In 2005/2006, the government authorized a comprehensive poverty assessment survey which was conducted under the auspices of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The research "combined a Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) with a Survey of Household Income and Expenditure" (UNDP: 2010). The findings were published in 2007. (Please refer to Kairi, 2007). This survey provided the government with concrete data on the extent of poverty in the nation. The government was able to determine that a crucial area of need affecting children was the provision of good nutrition on a daily basis. In addition, the government was aware of the increasingly high levels of obesity evident among children in all age groups. Thus, it started the National School Meals Programme in 2007, mentioned in the Introduction. Today, 18 government primary schools are participating in the programme. The schools were chosen to reflect areas of greatest need, both rural and urban. The programme has not been implemented as yet in the Barbuda, the smaller island of the twin nation state. The rationale for this exclusion is that, so far, Barbuda does not appear to have the levels of poverty experienced in Antigua. However, the majority of stakeholders who attended the national consultations on the CRC Report in Barbuda claim that there are children in Barbuda who could benefit significantly from this programme.

165. The meals provided under the programme are well-balanced. Instead of the "snack foods" such as corn curls and potato chips that children tend to bring to school in their lunch boxes, they are able to purchase a hot meal for a mere EC $1:00 per meal or EC$ 5:00 per week. Children, who are perceived to be in need of a meal but who do not have the means to purchase one, are given the meal free of cost. In the school year 2010-2011, an average of 77% of children enrolled in the participating schools took advantage of this service. On average, 4% of children in the schools' populations received their meals totally free of cost. The programme has been deemed to be highly successful. The children enjoy the meal and there is little or no wastage. No scientific study has been undertaken to access the impact of the programme on the nutritional status of the children. However, anecdotal evidence from parents and teachers suggests that the children tend to be more alert since they are no longer hungry.

166. With respect to the programme, the Antigua and Barbuda Educational Statistical Digest states the following:

> Between September 2010 and June 2011, the School Meals Programme served 312 918 meals. Expenditure on food items for meals (this excludes other expenses such as delivery, salaries, operating costs etc.), was EC$2 038 914.26.
>
> Although speculative, it is believed that the relatively lower subscription of schools such as Villa and Greenbay to the programme is in part due to the location of these schools in the heart of their catchment areas, so that a marked proportion of students go home for lunch. It is notable though that a higher proportion of girls are registered on the programme than are boys although the Country Poverty Assessment (Kairi 2007) suggested that a higher proportion of boys were living below the poverty line. (Ministry of Education, 2012: 53).

167. Just why this is so, cannot be ascertained at this point, but the observation suggests a fruitful area for future research.

168. As recently as February, 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced a programme called Zero Hunger as a further effort to combat poverty. With technical assistance from the Ministry, the programme encourages families and communities to engage in backyard gardening. Six communities — in both rural and urban areas — have been targeted to date.

4. Obesity

169. The UN Committee noted the concern of the State party with the increasing incidences of obesity among the nation's children. It must be said here that, on the whole, childhood obesity does not appear to be a problem in the Barbuda. The majority, if not all children in Barbuda, ride a bicycle both as a means of transportation and for recreational purposes. Also, traditionally, their daily diet includes a healthy portion of seafood.

170. The precise numbers of children who are diagnosed as obese is not known. However, the post-natal clinics keep statistics on the weight of children who attend the clinics. In 2010, over 300 infants under the age of one year old were deemed to be overweight. The numbers decreased in the higher age categories. (Please refer to table 4, annex 1).

171. The State party has, in recent years, vigorously attacked the problem of obesity in Antigua on several fronts. The Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) has been in the forefront of the drive to reduce obesity levels in children. In its first published annual report, 2010, the MBS states that, "Children — whom it is the MBS and the community's legal responsibility to protect — were also at risk from non-communicable diseases" (MBS 2010:19).

172. It is also mentioned in this report that the MBS, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, Sports and Health inaugurated a project called the Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) in 2008. The PAN project is organized around multiple interventions in both primary and secondary schools. The interventions include the identification of the children most at risk; the setting up of database of such children; and the subsequent treatment through medication (where necessary), physical exercise and nutrition. The Project also provides for preventative measures through lectures and exercise regimens for all children.

173. One of the most successful measures that PAN introduced in 2008 was the National Skip Rope Competition — an annual competition for individuals and groups from primary and secondary schools. This competition tests their speed and agility in skipping. According to the MBS:

> Parents testified that their children lost weight and practiced avidly to win trophies and medals. In fact, in time, the entire country seemed to be skipping. Children began to skip outside of competition time. The PAN skip rope competitions have

> gained respect on the school sports calendar as events through which school pride can be bolstered and trophies won. MBS was actually successful in prompting lifestyle change among the nation's youth. (MBS, 2010: 19).

174. This competition is still very popular and the MBS claims that "it was invited to share its success in tackling childhood obesity with its neighbour via a nationwide address. Dominica has since introduced a hula hoop programme and is reporting success with this initiative. (MBS 2010: 19).

175. Mention must also be made of three other initiatives undertaken by the Department of Youth Affairs to encourage lifestyle changes in the nation's children.

- Firstly, the DYA organises an annual Youth Sports Day which is aimed at promoting the efficacy of physical exercise among youth groups in the nation.
- Secondly, the DYA hosts a Youth Exhibition and Health Expo during its annual Youth Week. According to the DYA:

  > This activity usually incorporates two different ideas into one event. With the Youth Exhibition, young persons who have some sort of talent or skill (for example art, jewelry, and photography have all been featured) are invited to showcase their talent. Schoolchildren are invited and allowed to browse, interact, and even purchase interesting items and displays. There are also some non-profit organisations which advertise here as well, such as the Sickle Cell Association. In addition, in the health part of this event, health professionals in various areas are invited to do screenings on students. They also give structured presentations to the students to educate them and to encourage healthy lifestyles (DYA: 2013: Personal Communication).

- Thirdly, the DYA holds its annual Healthy Lifestyles Youth Forum every February as part of the Ministry of Education's Education Week. This forum, organised primary for teenagers, focuses particularly on the promotion of healthy, sexual lifestyles among youth.

5. Diarrhoeal disorders and malnutrition

176. In local health statistics, cases of gastroenteritis are the closest classification for cases of diarrhoeal disorders. It is most heartening to observe that cases of gastroenteritis have fallen significantly over the last decade or so. In 2000, cases of gastroenteritis in children under five years old numbered 698 and cases of the disorder in persons over five years old numbered 741. In 2012, there were 287 reported cases of gastroenteritis in children under 5 years old and 556 cases in persons over five years old.

177. The primary health care clinics collect data on children diagnosed as being "underweight". (The term "underweight" is used rather than "malnourished"). Statistics for the period, 2006-2012, show some fluctuation over the years in the numbers of children who have been diagnosed as being mildly to moderately underweight or severely underweight.

178. In 2006, of the 118 children diagnosed as being underweight, 115 were classed as being mildly to moderately underweight and 3, or 2.5%, as severely underweight.

179. In 2008, of the 123 children diagnosed as being underweight, 115 were classed as being mildly to moderately underweight and 8, or 6.9%, as severely underweight.

180. In 2010, of the 151 children diagnosed as being underweight, 132 were classed as being mildly to moderately underweight and 19, or 12.6%, as severely underweight.

181. In 2012, of the 157 children diagnosed as being underweight, 128 were classed as being mildly to moderately underweight and 29, or 18.5%, as severely underweight.

182. It must be pointed out that in 1992, some 20 years earlier than the 2012 date of the latest statistic quoted above, there were only 89 cases of children diagnosed as being mildly to moderately underweight and 5, or 5.3%, who were classified as severely underweight. No studies have been done to ascertain the reasons for the rate of increase in the numbers of children who are diagnosed as being severely underweight. However, two significant facts may possibly account for the increase. In the twenty-year period, 1992-2012, there was an increase in the number of primary health care facilities making access to care more readily available. And, too, there has been an increase in the population. It is therefore possible that a greater number of underweight children are seeking medical attention.

6. Family planning

183. The UN Committee recommended that the State party should address adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues. (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 54). The Antigua and Barbuda Planned Parenthood Association (ABPPA) continues to operate its clinic where counselling is available to all, including teenagers. It was noted in the initial report that there are no local laws that prevent persons under the age of 18 years from seeking contraceptive information and contraceptive devices of choice. The ABPPA offers counselling services at no cost. It also offers a wide range of contraceptives for both males and females including injectable contraceptives for women and the female condom. Based on the records of the ABPPA, a study on new acceptors of contraceptives was carried out in 2006. One of the findings of the study was that for the first six months of that year, 17% of new clients were teenagers. (See Nunes, et al. 2006).

7. Teenage pregnancy

184. The findings of a study on teenage pregnancy rates for Antigua and Barbuda (Martin, Doyle and Raphael, 2008) indicate that teenage pregnancy rates have fallen consistently over the last four decades or so. As mentioned in the HFLE Policy document, the authors of the study claim that, over the period 1969-1973, live births to teenagers accounted for 29% of the total number of births and by the period 1999-2003, they accounted for 16% of all live births. These rates are some of the lowest in the region (See Ministry of Education, 2010: 14).

185. According to the HFLE document, more recent statistics indicate that teenage maternity rates continued to fall, "with approximately 13% of live births being to teenagers in 2009, which included 2% to females of school age" (ibid. 14).

186. No research has been done to ascertain the reasons for this decline but increasing enrolment of both girls and boys in secondary schools might be one reason for delaying behaviours that might lead to pregnancy. The HFLE document mentioned the fact that the authors of the study on teenage pregnancy rates speculate that the fall in rates may have to do with "economic, social, educational and medicinal changes over the time period" (ibid: 14).

187. More recently, Mount St. John Medical Centre (MSJMC) collects statistics on births to mothers 18 years and under. Most of the births to teenagers occur at age 18 as the following statistics indicate:

- In 2009, of a total of 98 births to teenagers, 41, or 42%, were to girls aged 18 years, and 17, or 17%, were to girls 16 years and under. Two births occurred to 13 year olds. However, no births have occurred to 13 year olds since then.

- In 2010, there was a decrease in births to teenagers. Of the 86 births, 42, or 49%, were to girls aged 18 years and 16, or 19%, to girls aged 16 years and under.
- In 2011, the births increased to 2009 levels. Of the 97 births, 49, or 50%, were to girls aged 18 years and 29, or 30%, to girls aged 16 years and under.
- In 2012, again there was a significant decrease in births. Of the 87 births, 30, or 35%, were to girls aged 18 years and 27, or 31%, to girls aged 16 years and under.

188. The figures on teenage pregnancy appear to be relatively small in number. However, for a small economy such as Antigua and Barbuda, close to one hundred teenage pregnancies per year constitute a tremendous strain on social services. Also, each and every teenage pregnancy that is carried full term means some disruption of the education of the pregnant teen. Teenage mothers are allowed to return to school if they wish to do so. But some of them find it difficult to cope with the responsibilities of motherhood and attendance at school.

8. HIV/AIDS

189. Statistics on the incidence of HIV/AIDS in children aged 19 and under, disaggregated by age group and sex, are available from 2005 to 2012. In that seven-year period, twice as many female children presented with HIV/AIDS as males. Of the 27 reported cases in that period, 9 were male and 18 female. The statistics disaggregated by sex and age show the following:

- In 2005, there was only one reported case of HIV/AIDS in children. The case was of a female in the age group, 15-19 years.
- In 2007, the reported cases numbered 7, three of whom were male and four were female. Of the seven reported cases, one male was in the age group 0-4 years; two males and one female were in the age group 10-14 and three females were in the age group, 15-19 years.
- In 2009, there was a decrease in the number of reported cases. Only four cases occurred: two males and two females in the age group 15-19 years.
- In 2011, the number of reported cases fell even further to just one female in the age group 15-19 years.
- Similarly, in 2012, there was only one case of a female in the age group 15-19 years.

190. No children have been born with HIV/AIDS since 2008. This excellent statistic can be attributed to the fact that mother-child transmission has been virtually eliminated through careful pre-natal screening of all mothers in the primary healthcare system. The decreasing numbers of children with HIV/AIDS in the other age groups is testimony to the vigorous HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns that have been mounted in schools, in the churches and in the media.

191. Retroviral drugs and other treatments are available, free of cost to all children who are infected with the virus.

D. Social security and child-care services and facilities – Articles 18, paragraph 3, and 26

192. The main agency that defends the right of the child to adequate food, shelter and care is the Citizens' Welfare Division located within the Ministry of Health, Social Transformation and Consumer Affairs.

193. In the initial report, there was no discussion of the types of problems affecting children that were handled by the Citizens' Welfare Division. However, this agency now keeps detailed records of all the children that come under its care. The main categories of the kinds of cases that the CWD handles are presented in table 6, annex I. In all three years under review, 2010, 2011 and 2012, neglect constituted the highest number of cases seen by the CWD.

- In 2010, of 466 cases, 120 or 25.7% were for neglect.
- In 2011, of 474 cases, 122 or 25.7% were for neglect.
- In 2012, of 418 cases, 87 or 22.1% were for neglect.

194. The figure for 2012 indicates some decline in cases of neglect. In the same year, reported incidences of physical abuse constituted 12.6% of all cases. Sexual abuse specifically constituted 6.5% of all cases.

195. In 2001, the CWD had just two trained probation officers. They supervised both juvenile and adult offenders who were placed on probation. In 2005, probation was established as a separate unit within the CWD. Today, there are 11 probation officers in the Probation Unit who can deal with cases pertaining to the welfare of children and adults. Three of these probation officers are qualified to offer counselling as well. The Probation Unit is also charged with providing the courts with Social Inquiry Reports (SIR).

196. The welfare and counselling services offered by the NGO– CCOPE are on-going.

E. Concluding comments

197. From the indicators discussed above, it can be clearly seen that basic health and welfare of the nation's children continues to be of a relatively high standard. The State party has made considerable strides in improving the nutritional status of the nation's children through its safety net — the National School Meals programme. The incomes of parents have been augmented as well by the School Uniform Grant Programme which allows parents to spend scarce resources on items other than school uniforms.

198. The problem of increasing levels of obesity in children is well recognised and very positive steps have been taken by the State party to counter this trend.

199. Although there has been marked improvement in the welfare of disabled children, much more still needs to be done. Physical access to buildings still remains a major problem for persons with disabilities.

VII. Education, leisure and cultural activities

A. Education, including vocational training and guidance – Article 28

1. Legislation

200. As noted in the Introduction, the nation of Antigua and Barbuda passed a new Education Act in 2008. This Act was designed to bring some uniformity is the educational systems throughout the OECS since these territories share much in common, politically, economically and socially.

201. The basic right of every child to receive an educational programme appropriate to his or her needs is upheld in the new law. The new law also maintains the compulsory school age of 16 years and spells out the responsibilities of parents/guardians to ensure that

their children attend school regularly. Education continues to be free at all levels of the public school system.

202. The aims and objectives of the Board of Education (under the Board of Education Act, 1994) remain the same. These include the award of bursaries, financial assistance and scholarships to deserving citizens of Antigua and Barbuda (including naturalized citizens) to study and train at local, regional and international institutions of higher learning. The Board is also responsible for the management and administration of the free textbook assistance scheme.

203. Over the years, the number of scholarships and bursaries awarded by the Board has varied, depending on the demand for training in those areas that the Government deems to be priority areas of study. Despite timely reminders of its priority areas for training, the Board has experienced a persistent shortage of applications for scholarships and awards in the fields of Tourism and Agriculture, the country's main industries. (Board of Education Brochure: 2013).

204. In the 2001-2002 academic year, the Board spent over EC $ 7.2 million dollars on bursaries and scholarships for some 308 students. In 2005-2006 the amount decreased to approximately EC $ 5.6 million for 196 students. In 2011-2012, the amount was EC $6.4 million for 181 students. The year 2007-2008 was somewhat exceptional as EC $10.7 million was expended on 335 students.

205. Of the 535 students currently studying on Board of Education scholarships and awards, 166 or 31.03% are male and 369 or 68.97 are female. This great gender disparity in tertiary education can be observed throughout the region.

2. The administration and management of education

206. The structure of the education system in Antigua and Barbuda has not changed basically since the initial reporting period. However, under the new Education Act, 2008, the position of Chief Education Officer has been renamed: Director of Education. This is the approved designation for all the chief administrative officers in Ministries of Education in the OECS. The responsibilities of the post remain largely the same.

B. The philosophy and aims of education – Article 29

1. New legislation

207. Under the new Education Act, 2008, the philosophy and aims of education remain basically the same but are expressed in far more detail. Inter alia, a major aim is stated thus in Division1 (2b):

> The promotion of the education of the people of Antigua and Barbuda by the establishment of educational institutions for the purpose of fostering the spiritual, cultural, moral, intellectual, physical, social and economic development of the community.

208. Some new aims which address current concerns such as the need to foster a Caribbean identify and appreciation of the natural environment are expressed in the new law.

209. A critical educational policy document which has recently been approved is that of the National Policy on Health and Family Life (HFLE), 2010. Three of the stated aims of this policy are:

a. To mainstream HFLE, making it an integral and compulsory part of the curriculum of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools by start of the academic year 2012;

b. To assist children and youths to attain high levels of educational achievement and productivity required for the 21st century and beyond by raising the status of HFLE and including it at the three earliest levels of education;

c. To have HFLE as a compulsory component of the teacher training of all primary teachers, and for at least one-fifth of all secondary teachers in training to be encouraged to choose it as an elective; (Ministry of Education, 2012: 20-21)

210. The Policy also recognizes the urgent need to focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, a major concern that the UN Committee raised in its observations and recommendations to the State Party. It stated: "The Committee is also concerned that reproductive health education is not part of the official curriculum of primary and secondary education." (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 53).

211. This concern is addressed in the HFLE policy document which states unequivocally:

> Changes in society have led to the reality that adolescents spend an increased amount of time alone or with peers, unsupervised by adults. Time for positive interaction and intimacy with caring adults — parents or other adults — has decreased, which is likely to have adverse consequences for adolescent behaviour. Adolescent health, therefore, must be addressed at several levels — policy, community, to include schools, family and the individual. Many health conditions which develop in adulthood have their roots in childhood and adolescent health behaviours. In order for any programme to be successful, there must be a commitment by all sectors that work with youth: health, education, vocational training, juvenile justice and the church, among others. The challenges are significant, but the benefits are many. (Ministry of Education, 2012: 24).

212. The State party is pleased to have participated in the UNICEF/UWI research project entitled, "Situational Analysis of Sexuality Education-2010". This research was conducted by UWI in partnership with UNICEF in nine English-speaking Caribbean countries in 2010. The main goal of the project was to: "Ensure that children and young people are suitably equipped with the knowledge, skills and values to make responsible choices about their sexual and social relationships" (UNICEF-UWI: 2010).

213. The findings of the research point to the fact that most children in the nation, from primary school age and upwards, have been exposed to some level or degree of HFLE. For some children, their HFLE education formed a part of their curriculum; for others, it was by infusion, that is, some HFLE topics (for example, "sexual reproduction") were introduced by way of discussion in subjects such as Biology and Integrated Science.

214. The State party is aware that the best intentions must be translated into practice. It therefore acknowledges its disappointment that HFLE has not been introduced in all schools to date, although it is still a part of the curriculum of most of the government-run primary schools.

2. Universal Secondary Education

215. The nation already has universal primary education. In order to achieve its goal of "education for all", the State party is determined to introduce Universal Secondary Education (USE) by the school year 2013-2014. This goal was also recommended by the UN Committee (CRC/C/15/Add.247). The introduction of USE has been envisioned for at least five years. Its delay was predicated, for the most part, by the lack of sufficient places in secondary schools. However, the number of available spaces in secondary schools has

increased significantly by the recent conversion of three junior secondary schools to fully-functioning secondary schools. Plans are in progress to create two new secondary schools within the next two years to further meet the demands of USE. The principals of schools as well as education officers are currently holding regular workshops on the implementation of the measures needed to ensure the smooth transition and operation of USE.

C. Institutional infrastructure

1. Pre-primary day-care centres and pre-schools

216. It is useful to restate here that in Antigua and Barbuda, the care of infants and young children outside of the home — children ranging in age from a few weeks to age five — is undertaken by range of institutions operated mainly by the private sector. There are day-care centres which generally take care of children from a few weeks old to age four or five, pre-schools with children ranging in age from two to four or five years and a combination of both. The recent Education Act, 2008 (in Division 2, Sections 76-80) specifically addresses the issue of "Early Childhood Education Services," outlining the duties and responsibilities of proprietors of private educational institutions at this level.

217. Of particular significance is the requirement that such private, early childhood education institutions take out general insurance to cover loss or damage to both property and persons, including the children in their care. The government, through its Co-ordinator of Early Childhood Education continues to formally monitor such establishments, making sure they maintain high standards of general health and safety of the children in their care. The government also retains the right to oversee what is taught at such institutions and to prescribe the level of qualifications and training of their teachers who are 100% female. In pursuit of excellence in early childhood education, the government instituted an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education programme at the Antigua State College in 2010. The first cohort of 38 teachers is expected to graduate in 2013.

218. In the year 2010-2011, there were 91 early childhood education institutions, twenty less than in 2001. This decrease in the number of such establishments can be attributed mainly to the fact that many of the primary schools, especially the private ones, now have their own pre-primary sections that enroll children as young three years. These children, therefore, are now counted in the statistics of primary schools in the kindergarten section.

219. In 2010-2011, enrolment in pre-primary institutions was 3,362 children, approximately 39% of the estimated population of the 0-4 age group. In the academic year 1999-2000, the approximately 110 such centres had a total enrolment of 2,809 children. This was roughly 35-40% of the children in the age group 0-4 years. Thus, the percentage of children enrolled in pre-primary institutions has remained roughly the same over the last decade. As in the case of the enrolment in day care centres discussed previously, there were slightly more boys enrolled than girls: 1,435 or 51% males to 1,374 or 49% females. This 2% gender imbalance may suggest evidence of discrimination against girls. However, statistics show that slightly more boys are born in Antigua and Barbuda than girls. As will be seen when we discuss the enrolment figures for the much higher secondary level, there is a gender imbalance in favour of girls. An attempt will be made then to account for this disparity.

220. In February, 2008, the government established its first pre-school intended to be a model early childhood education centre. This pre-school, located at the Simon Bolivar Park in a low income area of the city of St. John, has a current enrolment of 30 students aged 3-5. A second pre-school was opened in March, 2013 in another low-income area. These two schools cater for approximately 75 pre-schoolers. Plans are in place to open other public pre-schools by the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

2. Primary schools

221. Enrolment of children — aged 5-12 years — in primary schools in the nation remains high, close to 100%. In the school year, 2011-2012, there were 61 primary schools, 7 more than were in existence a decade ago. Of the 61 schools, 29 are government-owned and 32 private. However, despite an increase in the number of schools over the years, enrolment in primary schools is trending downwards. The Ministry of Education noted "a decline of 10.0% over the 7-year period 2005-2006 to 2011-2012" (Ministry of Education, 2012:43).

222. The total enrolment in the 2011-2012 school year was 10,453 children, of whom 5,413 were male and 5,040 were female — a ratio of 51.8% to 48.2% in favour of males. It is interesting to note that the gender disparity in enrolment figures at the primary level in favour of males has decreased over the years viz:

- In 1994-1995, it was 6.8%
- In 1999-2000, it was 4%
- In 2010-2011 it was 4.6%
- In 2011-2012, it was 3.6%

223. Official statistics often maintain that enrolment in primary schools is close to 100%. If this is indeed the case, it is difficult to explain this gender imbalance. It could be that in the past, girls were kept out of school to perform domestic tasks but this does not seem likely in the 21st century. However, as surmised in the initial report, the gender imbalance in primary school enrolment may be more adequately explained by the fact that more girls than boys tend to pass the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) that determines entrance to the free, government secondary schools; thus a greater proportion of girls may leave primary schools before boys.

3. Junior secondary schools

224. In the past, the post-primary divisions of a few all-age schools used to cater for those students who failed to pass the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) by which they would gain direct entry into secondary schools. These post-primary schools which admitted students for three years were later designated "junior secondary schools". But currently, they are being phased out and converted to full, five-year secondary schools. Thus the enrolment figures for the year 2010-2011 are for Grade 9 only, the last year that students will spend in these schools.

225. In 2010-2011, there were 364 or 68.2% males enrolled in this type of school compared to 170 females or 31.8%. It is obvious that males predominate in junior secondary schools. This is not surprising as, indicated above, more females pass the CEE than males and thus gain entry into secondary schools. Those who failed to gain entry into free government secondary schools were admitted automatically into these junior secondary schools or they could try for places in the private, secondary schools.

4. National Technical Training Centre

226. In the school year, 2011-2012, the Ministry of Education established the National Technical Training Centre (NTTC) as a pre-secondary institution to cater for those students who did not successfully negotiate the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) or the Junior Secondary Examination required for entry into the free Government secondary schools. The major objective of this initiative is to ensure that all children stay in school up to the compulsory age of 16. It is also envisioned to be a first step in technical education for those

students who are not academically inclined. Thus, technical subjects (including fashion designing and entrepreneurship) are a major part of the curriculum.

227. The first batch of 257 students, 198 boys and 59 girls were admitted in 2011-2012. In the following year, 2012-2013, enrolment had decreased to 214, 161 boys and 25 girls. The obvious gender imbalance can be accounted for by the fact (noted above) that more girls tend to pass the CEE than boys.

5. Secondary schools

228. It must be noted here that so-called "failure" at the CEE taken by primary school students in order to enter secondary schools, is not necessarily a sign of the students' unsuitability for secondary education. The CEE functions mainly as a process of selecting students for promotion to the secondary level as there is still a shortage of spaces in secondary schools. However, enrolment for both sexes in secondary schools — both public and private — has increased over the last decade as more schools have been established. In 1999-2000, there were 14 secondary schools in the nation: 9 government-owned and 5 private. Today, the number has increased to 21. Of that number, 11 are government-owned and 10 are privately-owned. It is noteworthy that enrolment in the free Government secondary schools is increasing at a faster rate than in private schools as the new government secondary schools tend to be larger. Apart from the significant increase in the number of secondary schools, a Ministry of Education publication attributes the significant increase in enrolment to two other factors as well, namely: "increased pass rates at the primary CEE exams and a move towards Universal Secondary Education (USE) as part of the government's commitment to realizing this Caribbeanised Millennium Development Goal". (Ministry of Education: 2012:46)

229. The latter factor refers to the process whereby most primary school children will be absorbed directly into regular secondary schools under the system of USE, beginning in the school year 2013-2014.

230. Boys' enrolment in secondary schools remains somewhat lower than that of girls. At the beginning of the school year 2011-2012, the total enrolment in the 21 secondary schools was 7,907. Male enrolment was 3,920 or 48.2% and female enrolment was 3,987 or 51.8%, constituting a significant gender imbalance of 3.6% in favour of females. However, this gender imbalance in favour of females has declined from the high it was in the 1999-2000 school year. In that year, the gender imbalance was huge: 13.4% in favour of females. It must be pointed out that as the number of students enrolled in secondary schools increases, the trend is emerging of a greater percentage of males being enrolled, a move towards greater gender parity at this level. This trend was highlighted in the above-mentioned Ministry of Education publication which notes that:

> Generally, "boys' enrolment in secondary schools though lower than that for girls, has been increasing at a faster rate (51.2%) than that for girls (20.7%) over the 9-year period (2003-2012), showing boys to be the major beneficiaries thus far of the move towards USE". (Ministry of Education: 2012: 46).

6. Tertiary level institutions

The Antigua State College

231. The structure of the Antigua State College (ASC), the oldest Government-owned tertiary level institution, was discussed in detail in paragraphs 253-259 of the initial report. Student enrolment at the ASC has shown some growth in the last decade or so.

- The 1999-2000 enrolment at the College was 866 students: 287 males and 579 females, a ratio of 33% to 67%.

- The 2010-2012 enrolment was 986 students: 252 males and 734 males, a ratio of 25% to 75%.

232. The great disparity in the enrolment figures by gender points to the continuing failure of many male children to seek or to qualify for further education at the tertiary level.

233. It must be noted as well that the marked gender bias in the choice of areas of study has not changed over the years. For instance, males continue to dominate in the "traditionally male" field of engineering, even as enrolment in the Engineering Department has declined.

- In the 1999-2000 academic year, that department was almost 100% male. Of the 101 students on roll, only one was female.
- Over a decade later in the 2011-2012 academic year, of the 62 students on roll, only five were female: a ratio of 92% to 8% in favour of males.

234. A similar gender bias in favour of females persists in the Department of Business (formerly the Commerce Department). This department now offers Associate Degrees in Business as well as certification.

- In 1999-2000, of the 264 students enrolled in that year, 212 or 80.3% were female and only 52, or 19.7% were male.
- Of the 325 students enrolled in this department in 2011-2012, 263 or 81% were female and only 62, or 19% were male. Thus, the proportion of males to females in the Department of Business has, over a decade, remained much the same with a strong bias in favour of females.

235. In respect of the Department of Teacher Education, the gender bias in favour of female teachers undergoing training has increased steadily over the years. This is not surprising as females continue to dominate the teaching profession at all levels in the education system. The enrolment figures over the years reflect this bias.

- In the 1993-1994 academic year, there were 52 teachers enrolled in the Department of Teacher Education for in-service training. Of that number, 37 or 71.2% were female and 15 or 28.8% were male.
- By 1999-2000, the proportion of females to males in teacher training had increased by over 10%. In that year, 32 or 82.1% of the teachers were female and only seven or 17.9% were male.
- In the 2011-2012, of the 220 teachers undergoing training, 199 or 90.5% were female and 21 or 9.5% were male.

The University of the West Indies

236. The UWI Open Campus, Antigua and Barbuda (formerly the School of Continuing Studies) attracts mainly mature students with an average age of 35. The students are still overwhelmingly female. Of the current enrolment of 103 students, 93 or 90.3% are female.

D. Technical and vocational education and training

237. Please refer to paragraphs 267-270 in the initial report.

1. Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education

238. Since the initial reporting period, the government has made provisions for a more comprehensive approach to technical and vocational education and training. In 2005, the

National Youth Skills Programme became ABICE — the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education, a full-fledged tertiary level education institute with a Technical/Vocational bias. Its status was formalized under the Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education Act which was passed in 2008. Three key functions of ABICE as stated in the Act are to:

a) administer an educational institution for the purpose of fostering the achievement of excellence in study in the fields of adult and continuing education, particularly technical and vocational education;

b) provide courses and programmes for education and training and to use the facilities and resources of the institute to advance and develop knowledge and skill in the fields of technical and vocational education;

c) support industry and commerce, and assist the development of industry and commerce and the community.

239. The Act also introduced a progressive element: the setting up of a student governmental structure. The Act states, "there shall be a student government initiated by the Board and controlled by students who shall be democratically elected and follow a constitution approved by the Board." (Refer to Section 40).

240. Students can enter the ABICE at age 16 and study for Caribbean Vocational Qualifications awarded by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC).

241. Enrolment at ABICE has increased over the years but drop-out rates remain high. For instance, at the beginning of the academic year 2010-2011, 571 students (part-time and full-time) were enrolled in the various technical and vocational programmes. By the end of the year, about 50% of the students had left the institution. The reasons for this high drop-out rate have not been formally studied. It is surmised that many of the students who enter ABICE are students who had earlier dropped out of secondary schools and are subsequently seeking to continue their education. The State party is cognizant of the need for research to be conducted to understand the root causes of the high drop-out rates so that the problem can be addressed adequately.

2. Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute

242. The Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI) trains students to enter the hospitality and tourism industries, so very vital to the economy. Students get certification through sitting the London City and Guilds examinations. The Institute was closed in 1998 but reopened its doors in the 2002-2003 academic year after extensive renovations to its physical plant. Over the years, there have been more females than males enrolled in the various programmes offered by the institute. (Please see table 7, annex I).

- In the year 2008-2009, of a total enrolment of 90 students, 62 or 69% were female.
- In the year 2010-2011, of a total enrolment of 110 students, 79 or 72% were female.
- In the year 2011-2012, the enrolment increased significantly to 141 students. Of that number, 103 or 73% were female.

243. The major increase in enrolment in 2011-2012 can be accounted for by the success of the Institute in attracting school-leavers. It now has an enviable reputation as its programmes have proved to be very beneficial in obtaining jobs in the hospitality and tourism industries.

244. Generally, the statistics do not indicate any gender bias in choice of programmes. Males and females tend to be spread evenly throughout the various programmes.

3. Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology

245. The Antigua and Barbuda International Institute of Technology (ABIIT) continues to attract students in the technical fields. The Institute offers degree and diploma programmes in fields such as computer science, computer technology, banking and finance, graphic design, architectural design among others. However, its business administration programme is the most popular associate degree programme which attracts on average, 40-45% of the student body. Between 2008 and 2011, enrolment fell significantly. In the 2008-2009 school year, there were approximately 453 students on roll of whom approximately 300 or 66% were female. In 2011-2012, those numbers had dropped to a total enrolment of approximately 371 students of whom 221 or 59.5% were female. (These figures are not precise because enrolment varies somewhat from trimester to trimester within a given school year). No doubt these declining figures reflect the downturn in the economy as well as the vast number of online programmes that are now available to students. These figures also indicate the gender bias in favour of females that is so prevalent at the tertiary level.

4. Programmes for school leavers

246. The Gilbert Agricultural and Rural Development Center (GARD) is an NGO that has been in existence for over twenty years. Its focus has been mainly on training and guiding young farmers. However, it has since expanded its services to include among others, mentoring of young persons and advice on how to start a small business. More recently, it has turned its attention to youth at risk: specifically those out of school, out of work and living below the poverty line. In 2008, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and USAID, in collaboration with GARD, launched a programme called the Caribbean Youth Empowerment Programme (CYEP), aimed at youth between the ages of 17 and 25. (This programme was also introduced in several other Caribbean countries).

247. The programme is designed to train young persons for the job market. Its courses include life skills, vocational and entrepreneurship skills, Information Technology and most importantly, an internship and job placement component. 99% of the persons benefitting from the programme were identified as being poor or extremely poor. The programme has been highly successful to date: 51% of the 369 persons who enrolled in the programme have found employment on graduation. Another 23% has returned to school.

248. The success of its CYEP has encouraged the organizers to focus on an even more vulnerable group — children in conflict with the law. Negotiations are in progress with the Government to introduce a programme aimed at rehabilitating these children.

E. Guidance and counselling programmes

249. The UN Committee recommended that State party take steps to "strengthen developmental and mental health counselling services as well as reproductive health counselling and make them known and accessible to adolescents" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 54).

250. It is acknowledged here that adequate counselling for adolescents remains a serious challenge. The critical adolescent groupings of 12-18 years are to be found mainly in secondary schools. Some guidance and counselling of adolescents is being done at three government secondary schools. However, most of the personnel who counsel students are also the teachers of HFLE. Officials within the Ministry of Education have put forward a proposal to separate the personnel of these two teaching functions; teachers of guidance and counselling should not have to teach HFLE. As desirable as this proposal is, there is, presently, a lack of trained personnel to effect this separation.

251. The State party has made some attempts to rectify this situation, however. Guidance and Counselling is one of the priority areas recognised by the Board of Education for the award of scholarships and bursaries. Thus, the government is striving to ensure that there are sufficient trained counsellors to meet the demand for placement in all the schools in the nation.

252. Guidance and Counselling continues to be a part of the Teacher Training Programme at the Antigua State College. But it is not a core subject. However, all of the sixty-two secondary school teachers who were enrolled in the Teaching Training programme in 2011, elected to take the one-term (4-months) Guidance and Counselling course. It is envisioned that by the 2013-2014, HFLE will become an established a part of the school curricula at both the primary and secondary levels. Once this happens, Guidance and Counselling will also be given the priority status it deserves.

253. The Child and Family Guidance Centre of CCOPE continues to offer counselling services to children with behavioral problems. Their parents also undergo counselling and are encouraged to participate in their children's rehabilitation. Parents are invited to attend the National Parenting Resource Centre which is also run by CCOPE. Currently, there are approximately 40 children and 30 parents who regularly attend counselling sessions at the Centre. Apart from emotional counselling, the child clients, who are mainly teenage mothers, are supported in several ways viz.:

- The Centre offers remedial reading classes every Saturday to approximately 30 students.
- Teenage mothers get financial help for purchasing baby supplies.
- If teenage mothers desire to re-enter the school system, they are encouraged and supported to do so. (Currently, one student is enrolled in ABHTI).
- When asked for help, clients of the Centre are assisted in obtaining jobs.

254. The Directorate of Gender Affairs has over the years established a Life Skills and Job Readiness Programme that attracts unemployed young persons for the most part. This programme trains 65 young persons on average every year. A core subject area of this programme is reproductive health.

255. The Citizens' Welfare Division is among a number of agencies including NGOs and faith-based organizations (FBOs) that offer counselling services to children when necessary.

256. It must also be stated here that the Department of Youth Affairs holds its Healthy Lifestyles Youth Forum every February as part of the annual Education Week, coordinated by the Ministry of Education. This forum is primarily geared towards teaching 15-18 year olds the importance of healthy sexual lifestyles and how to properly respect themselves and others in terms of their sexual conduct.

F. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities – Article 31

257. Please refer to paragraphs 275-282 of the initial report where several measures and programmes that ensure that the nation's children enjoy leisure, recreation and cultural activities were discussed at length.

258. There are still no specific local laws that address Article 31 of the Convention. However, guided by the principles enshrined in the Convention, the new Education Act, 2008 states among its goals and objectives for the nation's children:

"(iv) appreciation and understanding of creative arts;

(v) physical development and personal health and fitness; and

(vi) the creative use of leisure time."

259. The State Party wishes to place on record the important work being done by the Department of Youth Affairs (since the last reporting period) in organizing leisure activities for youth. Only the major initiatives will be discussed here.

1. Youth Week

260. An important event in the nation's calendar is Youth Week, usually the last week in September. Within this week, Youth Volunteer Day is devoted to volunteer activities. Participating schools are allowed to choose their own activities, and the DYA assists with coordination well as media coverage. Another day in the week is Youth Sports Day. This day focuses on the importance of physical exercise and is geared towards getting youth groups and community groups to participate in a day of sporting activities. Work Experience Day is a one-day internship programme. The DYA reaches out to a number of businesses and organisations and requests that they accommodate at least one (sometimes several) students for a one day on-the-job internship. The schools are contacted and the DYA attempts to match the student's preferences to what is available.

2. The National Youth Rally

261. Mention must be made as well of the National Youth Rally held every year as part of the Independence anniversary celebrations. It is usually held on the last Thursday before Independence Day (November 1st). The National Youth Rally is coordinated by the DYA, along with a number of other stakeholders. It is an event where the entire nation is treated to the talents and displays of school children in the form of marching, drills, and cheerleading. Outstanding youth are also awarded at this event. The primary goal of the National Youth Awards is to reward young people who have excelled in various fields, such as education, art, culture, and sports. The awards also recognize those adults who have made vital contributions to the field of youth development, as well as corporate and business sponsors who provide financial and technical support to youth programmes.

3. The Summer Camp Training Workshop

262. The DYA organizes a Summer Camp Training Workshop every May, before the summer camp season starts. Here, summer camp providers are invited to take part in a one day workshop. The workshop covers some of the basic but important aspects of running a summer camp. Topics include the need for safety, as well as the importance of making the summer camp both educational and fun.

263. In addition, the DYA also monitors summer camps that are registered with the Department. Most of these camps are organized by FBOs. Officers from the DYA visit these registered summer camps within their zones and complete reports on various aspects of the camps. They monitor the appropriateness of the camp, safety measures and the developmental value of the programme for children.

4. Green Business Labs

264. In 2012, apart from its regular programmes, the DYA also hosted a special initiative: an event entitled "Green Business Labs." The Green Business Labs initiative was sponsored by the UNDP and the Young Americas Business Trust. It was a workshop that allowed young people to explore opportunities to start businesses which operate in a developmentally sustainable manner.

G. Concluding comments

265. The UN Committee expressed some concern at the high drop-out and repetition rates in the school system. It urged the State party to take appropriate measures, with the participation of children, to increase school attendance and improve on these rates. (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 59). The State party appreciates the concern of the UN Committee in this matter and seeks to reassure the body that school attendance, especially at the secondary level has improved significantly. Ten years ago, yearly attendance rates for secondary schools averaged approximately 85% for both sexes. But today, for the period September 2009 to July 2010, the average attendance rate was 88.9% with males registering 90.2% and females 87.6%. (The latter statistics were taken from the Education Digest, Ministry of Education, 2012: 48).

266. The increase in school attendance rates at the secondary level especially for girls can be accounted for by the fact that that some teenage mothers are now choosing to go back to school to complete their education after they have given birth. As was discussed earlier on, attitudes towards teenage pregnancy have changed for the better. Thus, a more sympathetic climate is encouraging a significant number of teenage mothers to return to school. It must be pointed out as well that more drop-outs from secondary school are taking advantage of the opportunities offered at ABICE. As indicated above, enrollment in all programmes at ABICE has increased over the years.

VIII. Special protection measures

A. Children in situations of emergency – Articles 22 and 38

267. As noted in the initial report, (paragraph 290) the Government is party to two international agreements that relate to refugees. These are the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Under the Ratification of Treaties Act, 1987, the Government ratified the convention and the protocol in April 1995. To date, there are no local laws pertaining to the issue of refugees. However, in 2001, the State party created an ad hoc Refugee Eligibility Committee to deal with a specific case of asylum involving an 11-year-old Rwandan girl.

268. It should be noted here that no person can join the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda or the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force until they have attained the age of 18 years. Also, since Antigua and Barbuda became a sovereign state in 1981, there has never been any occurrence of armed conflict.

B. Children in conflict with the law – Articles 37, 39 and 40

The administration of juvenile justice – Article 40

269. The initial report dealt at length with the two main legal provisions for children who come in conflict with the law namely, the Juvenile Act and the Juvenile Courts Act (please refer to paragraphs 293-299). As was noted in the draft National Child Protection Policy document, the two laws mentioned above came into being before the principles and provisions of the CRC were drafted. The authors of the NCPP recognise the inadequacies of these two laws and are resolved to seek for their repeal. (Ministry of Social Transformation, 2013:7). Currently, personnel in the Ministry of Social Transformation are in the process of presenting proposals to the State Cabinet to advocate for the adoption of the laws drafted in 2006 by the OECS Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Initiative. These draft bills

suggest more favourable provisions for juvenile justice — provisions that seek to uphold the best interests of the child at all times.

The Youth Intervention Unit of the Royal Police Force

270. A significant improvement in the administration of juvenile justice is the establishment in 2011 of a Youth Intervention Unit (YIU) of the Royal Police Force. The YIU came into being in recognition of the need to fulfill the provisions of Article 40 (3) of the CRC which enjoins State parties to treat every child who comes in conflict with law with dignity and respect. The CRC also encourages State parties to promote the reintegration of child offenders in society where they can assume constructive roles.

271. A major stated aim of the Youth Intervention Unit is to divert children away from the criminal justice system as much as possible, "taking action to deal with criminal offending behaviour without resorting to the judicial system". It also aims at diverting them "from custody into a range of community based sentencing alternatives". (Communication from officer-in-charge of the YIU: 2011).

272. To this end, the YIU has developed a number of strategies to implement these aims including an eight-step interactive programme involving both children and their parents. This programme includes sessions on anger management and conflict, respect and understanding of the law and the justice system, among others. The YIU also intends to use the principle of restorative justice "to resolve collectively the harm done, positively handling the aftermath of the offence and future implications in a controlled environment". This process would involve the active participation of the victim, the offender and the community. Other strategies envisioned by the YIU include educational programmes in schools and an eco-agricultural initiative where children at risk would be encouraged to engage in the planting of trees (ibid).

273. Since the established of the YIU in 2011, several cases handled by the YIU have had to be taken before the courts and dealt with both in chambers and open court. However, the general public is barred from the Magistrate's court when cases pertaining to juveniles are being heard. The officer in charge of the YIU claims these procedures were a matter of last resort. But it must be stated here that, as yet, no separate building has been exclusively designated as a juvenile court.

274. The numbers of children accused of committing criminal offences in the nation remains relatively low. As indicated in table 6 in the initial report, there were 56 cases in 1995; and in 2000, only 20. Statistics provided by the criminal record office of St John's Police Station for the period 2007 up to April 2012 (please refer to table 8, annex I) show fluctuations in the number of reported, juvenile offences thus:

- 78 arrests in 2007
- 34 arrests in 2008
- 25 arrests in 2009
- 22 arrests in 2010
- 32 arrests in 2011
- 11 arrests up to April 2012

275. The figures shown above relate to children aged 11 to 16 and omit 17 year olds, although 17 year olds should, according to the CRC, fall within the juvenile justice system. Interestingly, the rate of conviction is generally not high. For example, in 2009, of 25 children arrested, only seven were prosecuted and only one convicted.

C. Children deprived of their liberty, including any form of detention, imprisonment or placement in custodial settings – Article 37 (b), (c) and (d)

276. Section 7 of the Juvenile Act permits juveniles (persons under 16 years of age) who have committed crimes to be held in a "place of safety" until their cases are heard. Such detention should be apart from adults and they should be tried in special juvenile courts. The State party very much regrets that, to date, no such provisions have been made.

D. The sentencing of juveniles – Article 37 (a)

277. There have been no revisions to the Juvenile Act, 1951 which outlines the various ways of dealing with juvenile offenders as discussed in paragraph 307 of the initial report. Thus, the provisions for the sentencing of juveniles remain the same. However, in the last three decades at least, no juvenile has been subjected to whipping — a possible punishment prescribed in law. The State party recognises the need for this form of punishment to be expunged altogether from the statute books. Boys continue to be committed to the Boys' Training School.

E. Physical and psychological recovery and social integration – Article 39

278. As stated in the initial report "the State Party recognises that there is a need for children who are faced with difficult circumstances to be counselled and rehabilitated so that they can be restored to full emotional and physical health and grow up to be useful citizens of the society" (paragraph 308).

279. The Boys' Training School still exists as a facility that serves to rehabilitate boys who come in conflict with the law. According to the current head, the stated aim of the institute is "to reform, educate, and train boys ten years and above but below eighteen". Over the past 10 years, seventeen boys, on average, have been enrolled at The Boys' Training School. In 2008, there were 20 boys ranging in age from 13-17+. This number is 10 less than the enrolment in 2001.The current number in 2013 is 17. They also range in age from 13-17+. They have been sentenced for various misdemeanours ranging from misuse of drugs; larceny; being armed with an offensive weapon; wounding; malicious damage; house breaking and the need for care and protection. It must be noted that all cases come through the courts, even those who are there because they need care and protection, rather than having committed a crime.

280. The State party is aware that operation of this facility is still not acceptable in terms of best practices. The antiquated Training Schools Act, 1891 still controls who is sent to the institution and how it is run. Clearly, this Act needs to be amended or repealed to reflect more favourable treatment of delinquent or disadvantaged boys. Boys who are removed from their family environments because they lack care and attention, or have run away from home, are housed with boys who come in conflict with the law.

281. One of the major challenges that the institution faces is not having enough trained staff to fulfil the needs of the students. The fact that there is no clear policy or structure defining the institution is also cause for concern. However, a committee is currently working on a Policy Document outlining the policies, procedures, and form that any type of juvenile detention facility should take.

F. Concluding comments

282. Although the number of children who come in conflict with the law is still relatively small, the numbers are steadily increasing. The State party deplores the increase in violent crimes committed by children. Schools are experiencing more and more physical attacks by students on each other. This is in spite of the fact most secondary schools now have guidance and counselling services and the presence of security officers on a daily basis.

283. It cannot be denied that a great deal of work still needs to be done in establishing legal provisions for children who come in conflict with the law. The repeal or amendment of archaic laws pertaining to the administration and sentencing of children (such as the Juvenile Act, 1951) must be addressed.

IX. Children in situations of exploitation

A. Economic exploitation – Article 32

284. Please refer to paragraphs 320-325 of the initial report which detail the laws that protect children from economic exploitation.

285. The UN Committee recommends that the State party should make every effort to monitor instances of domestic child labour and to implement "all policies and legislation relevant to child labour" through, inter alia, public awareness campaigns on the rights of the child. (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 61). As mentioned earlier on in this report, it can be safely asserted that the general public as well as children themselves are far more aware of the rights of the child than in previous decades. The media, certainly, have been very instrumental in this regard. For instance, the Professional Organization for Women in Antigua (POWA) has, in recent years, inaugurated a back-to-school radio programme called "School Call-In" which, inter alia, is aimed at helping parents cope with the emotional, physical and educational needs of their school-age children. This call-in programme which takes place at the beginning of each school year, always generates much interaction between parents and the hosts.

286. It cannot be denied that there are still cases where children do assist in family businesses such as grocery shops (as permitted to a limited extent in law) or perform babysitting chores that may severely limit their playtime or even school attendance. However, on the whole, these practices are occurring less and less today. The number of truant officers in the Ministry of Education has increased over the years. They are seen to be much more vigilant in dealing with cases of truancy including interviewing and counselling parents who may be keeping children at home to help out with domestic chores.

B. Drug abuse – Article 33

287. Please refer to paragraphs 326-338 of the initial report.

288. The UN Committee commended the State party for its efforts in preventing drug abuse among the nation's children. However, it expressed some concern about the growing trend in the use of marijuana, alcohol and narcotic drugs by school-aged children. Drug abuse among the nation's children continues to be a great challenge in terms of the level of human and financial resources needed to solve the problem. The State party wishes to report, however, that it has intensified its assault on the problem in both policy and practice.

289. The Government, through the Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy (ONDCP) has set in motion a five-year Anti-Drug Plan which started in

2002. One of the objectives of the plan is to assist parents by developing tools and resources to combat the problem of drug abuse in children.

290. According to its authors:

> The Plan recognizes the importance of an approach which involves the family, school, workplace etc., working together on health and wellness driven programmes, dealing with the three major components:
>
> - Primary Prevention (awareness and education);
> - Secondary Prevention (counselling/treatment);
> - Tertiary Prevention (facilities aimed at rehabilitation for reintegration of addicts into society (ONDCP, Online Fact Sheet: 2011).

291. In 2005, a National Survey on "Drug Use Among Secondary School Students" was conducted under the auspices the National Drug Council of Antigua and Barbuda (NDC). The NDC is a non-profit voluntary organisation which is an advisory body to the Government through the Ministry of Health, Social Transformation and Consumer Affairs. Two of the major objectives of the survey were to collect baseline data to chart future trends and to determine the attitudes of youth towards drug use. The findings of the survey were published in 2008 with the assistance of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (CICAD/OAS).

292. The survey found that 73.4% of the secondary school children sampled claimed to have had at least one alcoholic drink in their lifetime. In a similar survey, conducted earlier in 2000, 61% of children aged 11-19 said they had had at least one alcoholic drink. These figures are a clear indication that rates of drinking alcohol among children in Antigua and Barbuda are increasing. Also, 25% of the children in the 2005 survey reported that they had used marijuana at least once. The government is aware of these statistics and has put measures in place to tackle the problem.

293. In March/April, 2013, the Substance Abuse Prevention Division (SAPD) of the Ministry of Health, Social Transformation and Consumer Affairs conducted another survey on drug abuse among school children. One of the major aims of the survey was to find out the current status of the problem. The findings would also reveal whether the intervention programmes have borne fruit since the last survey.

294. In 2007 the SAPD also introduced in schools, an educational programme entitled "Moulding Young Minds". Inter alia, the programme is aimed at imparting knowledge about drug use and its prevention as well as teaching anger management and conflict resolution. Overall, the programme takes a holistic approach in assisting youth in building life skills. It is the firm belief of the head of the SAPD that education about drug abuse should start as early as possible. The programme, therefore, has targeted twenty primary schools in the first instance.

295. The DARE programme organized by members of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda is still on-going in a number of primary schools in the nation. The programme continues to teach primary school children how to identify various illegal substances and educate them on dangers of drug use.

C. Sexual exploitation – Article 34

296. As noted earlier on, the State party has endeavoured, since the initial reporting period, to further protect children from all forms of abuse by the passing of the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003. A form of abuse which the Act mentions specifically is:

> the sexual exploitation of a child, molestation of a child, or the involvement of a child in unlawful sexual activity, prostitution or pornography; and any other unlawful act likely to cause psychological harm to a child" (Part 1, Preliminary Section).

297. There is reason to believe (from purely anecdotal evidence) that there may be teenagers who are working in houses of prostitution in the country. Prostitution is against the law in Antigua and Barbuda. But it must be admitted that houses of prostitution operate in the state with some degree of impunity. The State party recognises the urgent need for full compliance with the law in this regard.

298. As discussed earlier on under Section H- Abuse and Neglect, Article 19, the personnel of new Sexual Offences Unit established in 2008, are at particular pains to act in the best interest of child victims of sexual abuse. The identities of the child victims remain secret not only in court proceedings but in the media as well. They and their parents also receive counselling from trained professionals.

D. Sale, trafficking and abduction – Article 35

299. The initial report mentioned the very limited laws that protect persons from sale, trafficking and abduction. (Please refer to paragraph 342).

300. It must be pointed out, however, that UN Committee made specific recommendations to the State party to undertake a comprehensive study of such practices and introduce legislation to combat them (CRC/C/15/Add.247). The State party is pleased to report that in 2010, it passed an act entitled, The Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, 2010, the main purpose of which is:

> to give effect to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, 2000; to combat the trafficking in persons within and across the borders of Antigua and Barbuda; to provide for the offence of trafficking in persons and other offences associated with trafficking in persons; to provide measures to protect and support trafficked persons and for incidental and connected purposes.

301. The Act pays particular attention to welfare of children: it outlines specific severe punishments for offences against children especially if they are trafficked for sexual purposes. It also ensures the protection, care and rehabilitation of child victims.

302. The Act also established a committee to be known as the Trafficking in Persons Prevention Committee which will perform the functions of coordinating the implementation of the Act. The members of this committee are drawn from a wide-cross section of stakeholders including representatives from law enforcement, child-welfare agencies, immigration and NGOs. The Committee is fully functioning and has since investigated a number of cases of trafficking, mainly of adults.

E. Other forms of exploitation – Article 36

303. Other than those laws mentioned above that protect the child from economic exploitation and sexual exploitation, there are no other local laws that protect the child from other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspect of the child's welfare.

F. Concluding comments

304. There are local laws in Antigua and Barbuda which protect children from all forms of exploitation and drug abuse. However, the measures taken to prevent such acts leave much to be desired. There is still a great need to monitor closely the consumption of alcoholic beverages by children especially on festive occasions. There is also a need for a greater public awareness of the dangers of the use of legal drugs such as alcohol among children. Tolerance of the use of alcohol by children must be stamped out through public awareness campaigns.

305. The State party is also cognizant of the fact that the existing facilities to care for children who have been abused or exploited are currently inadequate. Child victims of abuse need to be placed in a safe environment where they can receive adequate care and rehabilitation. This is true for both sexes. Thus the draft National Child Protection Policy has made a policy statement declaring that:

> We shall consider establishing two small, therapeutic units, one for girls and one for boys. These will be short-term units, with a therapeutic regime for children who have been trafficked, abused or exploited or who are out of control (i.e. present a real danger to themselves or others). These units will be staffed by highly skilled and experienced social workers. (Ministry of Social Transformation, 2013:24).

306. It is to be hoped that such measures are introduced as soon as possible.

X. Children of minority or indigenous groups

307. It must be reiterated here that for centuries, there have been no indigenous peoples left in Antigua and Barbuda. As stated in the initial report, paragraph 351, immigrants and their children are here identified as minority groups because they form recognisably distinct groups in the society. They are easily recognised for the most part by their different accents or by their language. Under the Constitution, immigrants enjoy the same basic rights and freedoms as citizens, subject to the constraints imposed by the immigration laws of the country.

308. There was some discussion in the initial report that a significant number of immigrant children suffer discrimination with respect to access to free government social services. For instance, parents of immigrant children still have to pay fees for treatment at the government-run hospital and clinics.

309. Similarly, their access to the free, government primary and secondary schools is frequently limited. The usual practice is that migrants are encouraged to place their children in fee-paying, private primary schools for two years. The Ministry of Education then makes every attempt to transfer these children to the government-run, free schools. Once they enter the school system at the primary level, they are allowed (like any other child) to take the primary school examination (CEE) and proceed to the free secondary schools if they are successful. This discriminatory practice seems to have lessened, to some extent. Over the years, the enrollment figures in all schools in the nation show an increase in the proportion of immigrant children attending the free, government primary and secondary schools.

310. These discriminatory practices are regrettable but the Government is hard-pressed to cope financially with the strain that the influx of migrants puts on its social services.

Concluding comments

311. The immigrant population in Antigua and Barbuda, coming mainly from countries in the region, has increased since the initial reporting period. However, in the last few years, as the economic recession deepens, some migrants have elected to return home, particularly persons from Guyana. Generally-speaking, attitudes to migrants appear to be improving as they become more and more integrated in the local communities. The immigrants who are the least integrated in the society are the Spanish-speaking peoples who on the whole, live in distinct communities or parts of communities.

312. It is surmised that some of the older Spanish-speaking children who arrive in Antigua and Barbuda close to compulsory school age of 16 years, may in fact not be attending school. This is an issue that needs to be thoroughly researched and corrected without delay.

XI. Concluding comments and reform priorities

313. This consolidated report has attempted to describe and analyse as fully as possible the progress made by the State party in upholding the rights of the child as expressed in the provisions of the Convention.

314. It is safe to assert that since the reporting period of 2001, the nation has experienced considerable gains in positive attitudes towards the rights of children. Several critical policy documents, namely: the National Youth Policy, 2007, the HFLE Policy, 2010, and the formulation of a draft National Child Protection Policy in 2013, have helped to focus on the inalienable rights of children to develop their full potential. Much of the change can also be credited to the programmes and measures introduced by the Citizens' Welfare Division, the Department of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs, as well as the many programmes instituted by the Ministry of Telecommunications, Science and Technology aimed at bringing modern information technology to all citizens, particularly school children.

315. It is heartening to report that recently, officials in the Ministry of Social Transformation have prepared documents to be presented shortly to the State Cabinet urging that body to move forward in implementing the policies and processes enshrined in the Childcare and Protection Act, 2003. They also urge Cabinet to consider amending the Act to include among other changes:

- The establishment of an Office of Children's Registry as a centralized source of information on child abuse and related crimes against children. The Unit would be located within the Ministry of Social Transformation. It would "be responsible for receiving, recording and assessing reports of child abuse and referring these reports to the relevant agencies for investigation and action."
- The establishment of the Office of Children's Advocate (OCA) whose mandate would be "to safeguard the welfare of Antigua and Barbuda's children through educational advocacy, system reform, public awareness, training, and legal representation of children as set forth in Antigua and Barbuda Childcare and Protection Act, 2003".
- The replacement of the National Childcare and Protection Policy Committee with a Childcare and Protection Advisory Council. The structure and procedures of the former committee would be revamped to ensure that new body functions in a smoother and timelier manner. The new Council, composed of 9 rather than

11 members, would more aptly represent the various stakeholders involved in child welfare and advocacy.

316. The State party has to reiterate here that it has paid particular attention to relieving, to some extent, the levels of poverty in the nation as recommended by the UN Committee. Its "Safety Net Programmes" such as the National School Uniform Grant Programme of 2004; the National School Meals Programme of 2008; the Peoples Benefit Programme of 2009 have contributed in no small measure to a lessening of poverty affecting the nation's children.

317. Noting the increasing rates of obesity in Antigua and Barbuda, the UN Committee recommended that the State party "engage in efforts to educate children and their parents about healthy diets and lifestyles" (CRC/C/15/Add.247, para. 52 (c)). It is clear from the foregoing that State party has paid particular attention to this recommendation. Credit must be given to the Medical Benefits Scheme for the introduction of its various healthy lifestyle programmes and also to the Government's National School Meals Programme.

318. Despite such gains, the State party acknowledges that the amounts expended on education, health and other social services that profoundly affect the lives of children need to be increased. Regrettably, however, the servicing of the national debt still takes up the largest percentage of GDP. Since the initial reporting period, the economic recession which started around 2008, has severely limited the contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP. The State party is well aware of the consequences that decreases in revenue have on the lives of its citizens. It is therefore determined to use its limited revenues as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind that its children are its most precious resource.

319. It is clear that much more work needs to be done to ensure that the rights of children to develop their full potential are observed and implemented. There are some areas of critical concern that still need to be addressed. This is particularly relevant in respect of laws that address the definition of the child and the administration of juvenile justice. There is still an urgent need for a family court to be established that would operate in a child-sensitive manner, taking into consideration the best interests of the child. The State party notes with regret that legal reform in the nation tends to proceed at a very slow pace, mainly due to the lack of persons qualified to do legal drafting. This situation must be rectified sooner rather than later.

320. Another problem that is in great need of immediate attention is the lack of adequate facilities for boys who come in conflict with the law or who simply need care. This vexing problem must be a major reform priority.

321. Mention must be made, here, of the desire of the people of the sister island of Barbuda to have comparable services to look after the welfare of their children. Stakeholders who participated in the national consultations held in Barbuda are pleased that they have their own primary and secondary schools on the island. However, they deplored the high cost of sending their children to Antigua to attend tertiary level institutions and urged the Government to come to their aid in this regard. They also expressed a wish to have their hospital upgraded to deal with serious cases of injury and illness.

322. In closing, the State party is hereby pledging to keep the need for legal reform in the laws pertaining to the rights of the child in the forefront of its obligations to its citizens.

Annexes

Annex I

Tables

Table 1
The estimated population of Antigua and Barbuda, 2010

Age Group	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Percentage*
00-04	4, 380	4,180	8,560	9.4
05-09	4,350	4,374	8,724	9.6
10-14	4,057	4,318	8,375	9.2
15-19	3,543	3,928	7,471	8.2
20-24	3,421	3,738	7,159	7.9
25-29	3,476	4,079	7,556	8.3
30-34	3,668	4,578	8,246	9.1
35 and over	15,747	18,965	34,712	38.3
Total Pop	**42,642**	**48,159**	**90,801**	**100.00**

Source: Government of Antigua and Barbuda, Department of Statistics, 2013.

Table 2
Government expenditures on health and education for selected years and estimates for 2013 in millions of EC dollars

Area of allocation	*2001*	*2006*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*
Education	59,852,239	62,725,746	77,093,677	76,337,364	84,446,171
	(11.69%)	(9.41%)	(9.71%)	(10%)	(10.73%)
Health	67,035,578	81,101,634	96,843,052	95,290,772	101, 326,626
	(12.66%)	(12.87%)	(12.00%)	(13.00%)	(12.00%)
Total Budget	**511,832,617**	**666,512,648**	**793,620,235**	**752,591,253**	**786,992,836**

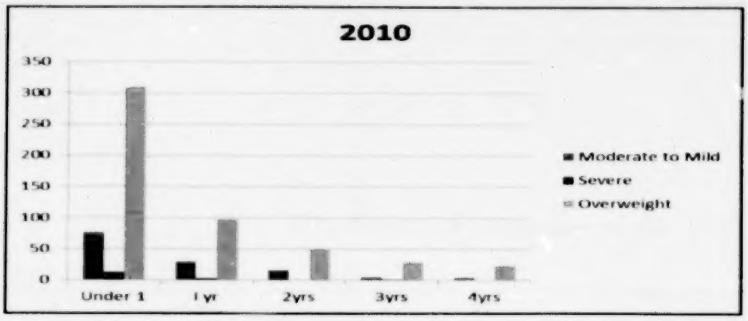
Source: Antigua and Barbuda Estimates of Recurrent Revenue and Expenditure, 2013.

Table 3
Selected vital statistics of Antigua and Barbuda: 2007-2011 / rates 2007-2011

	2007	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*
Birth rate	15.07	16.60	15.90	14.00	16.19
Death rate	5.87	6.19	5.67	5.24	6.00
Infant mortality rate	21.72	17.39	15.67	15.00	17.00
Perinatal death rate	22.29	21.35	18.34	8.00	15.00
Maternal rate	0.81	00	1.42	0.81	00

Source: Health Education Unit, Ministry of Health, Government of Antigua and Barbuda, 2013.

Table 4
Children four years old and under diagnosed as underweight or overweight



Source: Health Education Unit, Ministry of Health, 2013.

Table 5
Provision for children with special needs in Antigua and Barbuda: 2011-2012

Name of Institution	*Number of Children*	*Male*	*Female*	*Age Range*	*No of staff*	*Trained Teachers*	*Type of Disability*
Adele School	74	46	28	5-18+	14	11	MR, DS, CP, Dyslexia
Unit for the Deaf	14	6	8	5-18	8	2	Deafness
Unit for the Blind	8	4	4	5-18	3	3	Visual Impairment
Victory Center[a]	19	8	11	5-16	6	6	MR, DS Dyslexia
Visionaries for Christ	18	9	9	n/a	n/a	n/a	MR, DS, deafness, Visual Impairment
Amazing Grace Foundation[b]	6	4	2	9 - adult	5 (shift system)	1	MR, DS, CP, Autism, Paralysis

Primary Source: Educational Statistical Digest 2011, Ministry of Education.
Key: MR (Mental Retardation); DS (Downs Syndrome); CP (Cerebral Palsy)).
[a] This school was started in the school year 2012-2013.
[b] This is a residential home, not a school.

Table 6
Selected case types: child clients of Citizens' Welfare Division

Type of case	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*
Physical abuse	56	47	53
Sexual abuse	36	11	27
Neglect	120	122	87
Custody	52	71	71
Counselling	4	7	2
Maintenance	72	22	51
Adoption	5	2	5
Yearly Client Totals	**466**	**474**	**418**

Source: Citizens' Welfare Division, Ministry of Social Transformation, 2013.

Table 7
Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute enrolment statistics: 2008-2012

Year	*Total Enrollment*	*Male*	*Female*	*Programme*
2008/2009	90	28	62	
	15	2	13	Food & Beverage Service
	22	10	12	Culinary Arts
	0	0	0	Food & Beverage Operations
	16	2	14	Hospitality Management
	14	2	12	Reception & Sales
	23	12	11	Basic Cookery
2009/2010	120	33	87	
	17	5	12	Food & Beverage Service
	29	9	20	Culinary Arts
	10	3	7	Food & Beverage Operations
	23	2	21	Hospitality Management
	19	0	19	Reception & Sales
	22	14	8	Basic Cookery
2010/2011	110	31	79	
	8	3	5	Food & Beverage Service
	25	11	14	Culinary Arts
	12	2	10	Food & Beverage Operations
	24	4	20	Hospitality Management
	21	0	21	Reception & Sales
	20	11	9	Basic Cookery
2011/2012	141	38	103	
	10	3	7	Food & Beverage Service
	46	14	32	Culinary Arts
	13	4	9	Food & Beverage Operations
	33	7	26	Hospitality Management
	18	2	16	Reception & Sales
	21	8	13	Basic Cookery
2008-2012	461	130	331	

Source: Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI), 2013.

Table 8
Juvenile offences in Antigua and Barbuda: 2007- up to April 2012

Offences	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*
Armed with off. weapon	2	1	0	1	0	0
Breaking & Attempted Breaking	4	2	3	1	7	1
Larceny & Attempted Larceny	10	6	2	4	3	3
Poss. of Can/coke	11	7	7	1	5	3
Poss. of Firearm	1	1	0	0	2	0
Poss. of Ammunition	5	1	1	1	2	0
Murder	0	0	3	0	1	0
Attempted Murder	1	1	0	2	0	0
Wounding & Wounding with intent	10	2	5	5	4	2
Receiving	1	1	0	0	1	0
Robbery & Attempted Robbery	3	2	1	1	0	0
Shooting	0	0	0	0	1	0
Burglary	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sexual Offence	14	1	0	0	1	0
Minor Offence	15	8	3	5	0	0
Malicious Damage	1	1	0	1	4	0
Aiding and Abetting	0	0	0	0	0	1
Battery on Police	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**78**	**34**	**25**	**22**	**32**	**11**

Source: St. John's Police Station, 2013.

Annex II

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Annex III

Laws and acts referred to in the report (short titles)

- Adoption of Children Act
- Age of Majority Act, 1994
- Antigua and Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education Act, 2008
- Antigua and Barbuda Labour Code, Division E
- Births and Deaths (Registration) Act
- Board of Education Act, 1994
- Childcare and Protection Act, 2003
- Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda (1981)
- Corporal Punishment Act
- Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act, 1999
- Education Act, 1973
- Education Act, 2008
- Guardianship of Infants Act
- Juvenile Act, 1951
- Juvenile Court Act, 1948
- Magistrates Code of Procedure Act
- Maintenance of and Access to Children Act, 2008
- Misuse of Drugs Act
- Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act, 1993
- Offences Against the Person Act
- Post Office Offences Act
- Sexual Offences Act, 1995
- Social Security Act, 1972
- Training Schools Act
- Trafficking in Persons (Prevention) Act, 2010